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THE CONSULTATION.

"Listen, and I will tell you!"

Father Miller.

Page 68.

THE GOOD LORD STILL REIGNS!

THE STORY
OF
FATHER MILLER.

Written for his Young Friends

BY

Franz Hoffman.

TRANSLATED BY LEWIS HENRY STEINER.

PHILADELPHIA:
REFORMED CHURCH PUBLICATION BOARD.,
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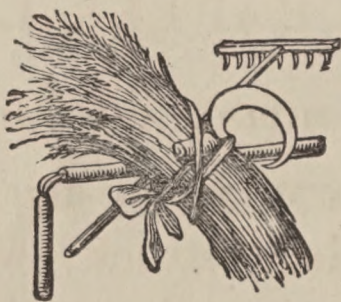
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THE STORY
OF
FATHER MILLER.

CHAPTER I.

FATHER MILLER AND HIS WIFE.



ONE warm Spring-morning, just as the clock struck twelve, Father Miller came home, in accordance with his usual habit, placed his bamboo cane with the ivory head in its accustomed corner, laid his hat on the little table near it, and quietly wiped the perspiration from his brow. Then he joined his hands behind his back and, as washis

custom, walked a little while in silence up and down his room. Mother Miller, who was sitting by the window, cast an anxious, sympathetic glance at the father, shook her head, was about speaking, but bethought herself of something else, and continued knitting industriously at the stocking, which was visibly growing longer under her nimble fingers.

“Mother,” said Father Miller, suddenly, in a depressed tone, “this cannot go on longer! We must really retrench our expenses still more! Only think, just now, as I passed through the market, the Crier was ringing his bell and giving public notice, that the precious gift of God—our daily bread—had been raised six pennies in price, by order of our very sage magistrates. If it goes on this way, we shall soon not have money enough to keep ourselves supplied with the staff of life.”

The father had talked himself into a bad humor, and his eyes fairly flashed, as he now stood in front of his wife, and continued speaking: “And whence comes

this? Simply because these rascally grain-dealers have not had their operations checked. I wish I were king for only one day—only one single day! How astonished they would be!”

“But, husband, dear,” replied the mother, with soft voice and a pleasant smile upon her lips, “indeed, you are going too far. Don’t worry yourself with foolish fears! Your table thus far has always been provided, and we have all had enough; indeed, we have even experienced worse times than these. Only think now, how things looked after the war, when a bushel of rye cost five dollars. Did we ever then even once go to bed hungry? Has not the good Lord, for Christ’s sake, everywhere and at all times, helped us in our necessities? Have we not always had a roof over our heads, and clothing to cover our nakedness? My dear, good husband, why should you be discouraged, if provisions are a little higher in price? The good Lord still reigns, and we are still His children in Christ, as

we were years ago. Lift up your head, my dear, and look about in joy. He, who feeds the young ravens and clothes the lilies of the field, as the Saviour assures us, will then not desert us, who look up to Him with joyous and trusting hearts."

Father Miller was somewhat quieted by these words of his sensible, good wife; but the dark clouds, which shaded his brow and made his heart unusually heavy, were still not entirely driven away.

"But see, mother," said he, "you speak just as you understand it! Yes! if it were nothing more than a little eating and drinking, shelter and clothing, I would have to yield the point to you. But what will become of the children? William is now seventeen years old. The youth is so industrious and clever, that he gives me a great deal of pleasure. Even yesterday, the School Director said many good and pleasant things about him, and advised me again to allow him to

continue his studies. Yes, but with what? Our small income is scarcely sufficient for our daily necessities. How would it be, then, if we should be obliged to support the youth at the expensive University? And then our Anna and Albert! It is true, that the girl will soon be out of school, and will cost us no more there. But the little boy must also learn something! How then? One in the University, the second at school, and our income no larger, while the little necessities of life are ever growing dearer. Mother, if all this is not enough to make one's head dizzy and set it aching, then I know nothing about it!"

The wife also began to reflect, and the bright, pleasant smile gradually disappeared from her lips, while Father Miller poured into her heart all the cares that oppressed him. Nevertheless, she looked into the darkened eyes of her spouse with firm confidence and, pressing his hand, encouraged him.

"The good Lord still reigns, father,"

said she softly. "Only don't forget that, husband dear! See now, if it is right and proper for William that he should study, the means for it will be found. If not—then we must console ourselves in this, that God's will has determined it otherwise, and rest content in this thought. You are no scholar, husband, and yet it has gone so well with you all your life, that we cannot be sufficiently thankful. Why despond now, when we have received so many proofs of God's fatherly love? No, no! husband! You must not complain and grieve, but rather assist me to reflect, whether there may not still some means be found, in spite of all obstacles, so that we can yet attain the end of our wishes."

"Mother, I see no possibility!" said Father Miller. "No possibility—none at all! Only think of it, what expenses are hanging over us. There is first, the interest on the cost of our house, which we must pay on St. John's day. That makes ten dollars. Then William must have a

new coat; for recollect, he goes around still in this warm weather in my old pilot cloth coat, whose stitches will no longer hold together, and then he perspires in it to such a degree, that he will soon evaporate into pure steam or melt into water. Now, even if I give him my light-green summer coat, and content myself with the linen one, it will cost five dollars, because it must have a new lining, and the tailor must live, and will not work for us for nothing: and so, ten and five make fifteen dollars. Next, Anna and Albert must have new shoes, which will also cost money. My shoes must be soled; for I have been obliged to fasten the soles, which flapped quite miserably, with a piece of twine to the uppers. Then, wife, you may say what you will, but you can't go any longer with credit into the streets with your dress. A new dress must be had, and that will cost three dollars, even if we select very plain calico and you play the mantua-maker. We must also eat and drink, must pay tui-

tion-money; in short, when I take all these things together, there only remains of my whole quarter's salary probably thirty dollars,—and with that, how can we let the youth pursue his studies? It would not answer. It wouldn't answer, even if he were to live on nothing but dry bread.”

With long strides the father again measured the room, and the mother remained silent, not thinking of any consolatory answer. In fact she was obliged to acknowledge the truth of everything her husband had said, and a mouse couldn't gnaw a bit off from the expenses as he had stated them.

“Yes, husband,” she began, with trembling, “that would indeed leave us nothing else but the necessity of retrenching a little more, as you remarked just now. Let us see! I have always, up to this time, used three dollars a week for household expenses. If I were to cook a little more sparingly, I could make two and a half answer, and that would save

nearly seven in a quarter. Now see, this will be as good as though we had made it, and it will come in place nicely for William, should he go to the University. Besides, husband dear, you have now served Herr Hartmann faithfully for eighteen years and more. Can he not be induced to increase your salary?"

"That he won't do," replied Father Miller, shaking his head. "I know him too well for that. Although I speak but the truth—that I do him more service than an ordinary copyist,—indeed, that I do more than he himself does, still—no, mother, we dare not expect it; banish the thought from your mind. I will give up smoking, and my cup of coffee after dinner, which is only a luxury, and instead of drinking a glass of beer in the evening, will content myself with a glass of water, which will quench my thirst better. Then we can also save oil in the lamp of an evening, especially in summer, when the days are long; and if we find it tiresome, we can chat together, and

that will make the time pass. Then—yes, that's it—I can rise an hour earlier in the morning than was our custom. The morning hour has gold in its mouth. If there should be no gold, at least there will be silver. If I employ my time diligently, I can earn two silver-groschen more by copying every day. That will be twelve groschen a week (not counting Sunday) and the grand total for the year will be six hundred and twenty-four silver-groschen, or twenty dollars and twenty-four silver-groschen. Your twenty-eight dollars added to it will make already forty-eight. Dropping coffee, tobacco and beer, we can add twenty more, and we will have saved sixty-eight dollars. Mother, positively it will answer the purpose!”

“Indeed it will, husband dear,” cried the wife, much rejoiced, as the eyes of her husband began to look more happy. “But, my dear, you must not be deprived of your cup of coffee. Every laborer is worthy of his hire, and one as

diligent as you should have double hire! No, no — whence indeed could you get strength and courage to perform your arduous duties, if you allowed yourself no recreation—no refreshment? You mustn't think of that, my dear."

The wife arose, wound her arms around the shoulders of her husband, who offered but feeble resistance, and gazed so brightly and pleasantly into his eyes, that Father Miller scarcely had courage to resist her persuasions. He still refused, although it was done quietly. Then the children entered the room and, as the time for dinner had arrived, the conversation was broken off. The mother hurried out to the kitchen to dish up the dinner. Anna followed to assist her as much as possible, and, in a few minutes, a very savory potato-soup was on the table. As on every day, so on this one, the short, simple grace was said, and then all ate the meal with as hearty a relish as though they had been guests at the king's table.

The father was enjoying the last spoon-

ful of his simple meal, when the front door creaked, and soon after there was a knock at the room door. "See who is without," said the father to Anna, and the girl sprang quickly forward to open the door. It had already, however, been opened, and the servant of the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos entered the room. Father Miller knew him, because he had often transacted business with that officer, and he was only surprised that the servant had sought him at his house, and not, as was the custom, at the office of Hartmann, the Advocate and Notary.

"Well now, what do you bring me, Dietrich?" he asked the servant, rising from the table and going towards him. "The business must be urgent, since you come here."

"I have only to present the respectful compliments of the Privy-Counsellor, and to give you this note," replied the servant. "He told me that I need not wait for an answer." Saying this, he handed Father Miller a neatly folded note, made

a slight bow, and left as quickly as he had come.

“What can the Privy-Counsellor want of me?” said Father Miller, more to himself than to the others, meditating as he weighed the letter in his hands. “Hem!”

The letter was not immediately opened, but he seated himself again at the table, and waited patiently until the children were all satisfied, and the mother had returned thanks when the meal was finished. Then William seized his books, Anna cleared off the table, Albert ran into the street to play with his young companions, and the mother, after she had filled the father’s pipe, went into the kitchen, prepared a cup of coffee as usual for her husband, and then carried the coffee into the chamber where he had gone, as was his custom, to enjoy an hour of rest, and to chat with his wife about anything that had occurred during the day. When the mother entered the room, she saw the father sitting in the arm-chair, while on a little table near

him was the letter, which had just arrived, with its seal broken.

“Now, husband, dear, what’s the news?” asked the mother, extending to her husband the pipe with tobacco, and a lighter. Father Miller, still absorbed in thought, took the pipe, ignited it, without thinking of his resolution, and took a few vigorous puffs. Suddenly it occurred to him, that he had intended not to smoke any more; when, dissatisfied with himself, he pushed the pipe aside, and pushed the cup of coffee with his hand far away from him.

“Mother,” he said, reproachfully, “I told you that” —

“Why, you have told me nothing,” said Mother Miller, interrupting him, and putting the cup with gentle force again to his lips. “There, sip and drink to your pleasure and satisfaction, or I shall go directly out and won’t speak a word with you until you are done. If you won’t do it for your own sake, do it for mine; for it seems always as if

there was something wanting, when I don't see you enjoy this, after dinner."

"But" —

"No more buts!" said the mother, with emphasis.

"You good wife!" said Father Miller, half smiling, half excited, holding the mother fast, as she pretended she was about putting her threat into execution. "I must then do as you wish, because I must speak to you of something very important. Stay, and sit down here! and now—read this letter!"

The mother read it, and the father, while contentedly sipping his coffee, watched his wife's face, the features of which grew more pleasant and fuller of smiles as she read on.

"O, husband, dear," said she at last with joyous countenance. "This is indeed very charming news! Here we are now freed from all want! Do you think that the Privy-Counsellor is really in earnest, when he offers you six hundred dollars salary as a Secretary of the Ex-

chequer? If, husband, that be true, which is here written in black and white, the good Lord couldn't send us more pleasant news. And this comes just when we were anticipating want and sorrow. For Heaven's sake, my good husband, why don't you rejoice?"

The mother's question was a proper one; for Father Miller looked very grave, and thoughtfully shaking his head from side to side.

"Now see," he said; "the place in the Exchequer would indeed be quite grand. But there's exactly the difficulty in the case. Because it would be so great a blessing for me and all of us, I can't yet believe it with my whole heart. Either the Privy-Counsellor has not the power to procure for me the place, or—and that seems to me most likely—he wouldn't procure it without making me compensate him suitably for it. I don't mean in money, because he knows, just as well as we, how small our resources are. No, he will require perhaps some-

thing of me, that I cannot conscientiously do, and then the whole business, which pleases you so much, will come to nothing. Am I not right, little wife, in thinking we are of one mind, never, for mere worldly treasures, to deviate one hair's breadth from the path of uprightness?"

"Yes, most certainly, that is a matter of course, husband, dear," replied the mother. "But see, here is your usual style and manner again! Instead of rejoicing and thanking the good Lord for all the blessings and loving-kindnesses he showers down upon us, you indulge in strange doubts about things that in fact only exist in your imagination, and in this way destroy all the happiness of life. Now, husband, dear, if you would take my advice, you would put on your holiday coat, and go straightway to the Privy-Counsellor, to thank him properly for the good will, which he so plainly shows toward you in this matter. Do it, husband! That is the most sensible plan."

“As you look upon the matter, so must it indeed be,” replied Father Miller, cautiously, but not rising from his chair. “But—but I have known the Privy-Counsellor for a long time, and I tell you; he does nothing gratuitously. Let one only confide in such a great man once! Yes, indeed, if he hadn’t expected something from the old copyist, he might drudge still longer with Hartmann, the Advocate, and write his fingers stiff. There is some kink in the business, wife, some kink, I tell you, and that a very large and crooked one!”

“Oh, husband, dear, what kind of a kink can there be? Herr Hartmann has accidentally spoken of you at some time, and given you the praise to which you are entitled. The Privy-Counsellor has heard it, and inquired about you, and has ascertained nothing but what is good and loveable. The place of Secretary was vacant. He thought of you; knew that he could trust you. What wonder is it, that he seeks to offer you the place?

Indeed, the thing is quite simple, husband, dear!"

Father Miller still shook his head. Mother Miller's words seemed to fall upon very stony and unfruitful soil.

"That is nothing, all nothing!" he said. "He would have looked after very different people from me! I know that well. That a great man would trouble himself about a poor copyist of an Advocate! All smoke, pure smoke! Nevertheless, you are still right, mother! I must go to him, return suitable thanks, and then await, trusting in God, whatever happens. But do not rejoice too much, dear wife! Think with me: The thing has a kink in it, and that a large one."

Father Miller rose, put on his holiday coat, which the mother had quickly brought out for him, knocked the dust off his shoes, looked after the strings that held the soles and the uppers together, and betook himself to the Privy-Counsellor's. With an anxious heart the mother await-

ed his return. When he arrived, she saw his face was somewhat brighter; still he said nothing more than: "I must make application to the Exchequer, and ask for the vacant position. The Privy-Counsellor has promised to do his best for me. We will see! I shall not let the opportunity pass by; but, mother, do not rejoice too soon, only think of the kink."

"And did the Privy-Counsellor say nothing about the kink?" asked Mother Miller.

"Not a word, indeed," said the father. "But men don't always blurt out their thoughts, especially such skilful rogues. Now, now! only be quiet, mother! I know all you would say. But we shall see!"

The father took his holiday coat off, hung it in the cupboard, put on his old Jacob, as he called his working coat, and betook himself, as on other week days, to the office of Herr Hartmann, the Advocate and Notary. The mother smiled, as she

looked after him, and, when he had turned the corner, said half aloud and half to herself: "The brave, good and yet incredulous old grumbler! When happiness even once smiles on him, he has no pleasure in it, because he will always find scruples and doubts. This time faith shall be planted in him!"





CHAPTER II.

IF SINNERS ENTICE THEE, CONSENT THOU NOT.

THE mother gave her husband no peace until she had seen the application to the Exchequer, desired by the Privy-Counsellor, written, sealed and directed. Father Miller hesitated and delayed, put the business off from day to day, and alleged sometimes this and sometimes that reason, as an excuse for his tardiness. At last, however, the perseverance of the mother was victorious, and she seized the father's letter with joy in order to send it by William.

“Do you hear,” said she to her son, “give the letter to no one but the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos himself. Much depends on his being favorably disposed; the

gratification of your own wishes and the happiness of your parents!"

William promised to follow the orders of his mother to the letter, and hurried away. But the mother then said: "Gottlob! Now, as we have done all that can be done, I am satisfied."

"I wish I were so!" said Father Miller. "But I know not why it is, I have no real pleasure in the whole business. It always seems to me, that, instead of the happiness which you are hoping and expecting, nothing but mischief will come out of it. I must, however, speak once with Herr Hartmann about it."

"No, husband, don't tell him, I beg you!" the mother said quickly. "Why should you? Herr Hartmann will only be vexed about it, because it is natural that he should fear to lose so industrious a worker as you are, and then you would have nothing to expect but trouble and vexation up to the time of leaving his office. Why then talk about it before the time? See, husband, dear, you are al-

ways saying that we women can never keep anything secret, and now you are the One who cannot keep silence. Talking is very well, but the old proverb runs: "Silence is better than silver and Gold."

"Each in its own time, mother!" replied Father Miller. "Herr Hartmann must know this at some time, and, therefore, I think it better I should tell him myself the whole story, than wait for somebody else to do it."

"Undoubtedly you must tell it," answered the mother, "but not before the proper time arrives. You are not bound by oath to communicate everything to him that concerns yourself alone."

Father Miller was obliged to admit this, and at length consented. He kept silent about the whole affair, and performed his duties honestly and indefatigably as before. Thus a few weeks passed away, and there was scarcely any reference made to the subject, because the mother saw, that, whenever she began to speak of it, the father was put out of hu-

mor, and for hours was pensive, and immersed in brown study. She scarcely doubted any more, that her wish would be accomplished, because she thought, and justly, that a brave, upright and industrious man, like Father Miller, well deserved the good fortune then in prospect. Her eyes often rested with joy upon her children, especially upon William, who had passed a brilliant examination and had secured a unanimous certificate from his teachers of his fitness for entrance into the University. Every thing indeed had been prepared for his departure, and the mother waited only for the receipt of the salary, which was almost theirs, in order to send him with her blessing from the parental roof.

It happened, one day, that Father Miller came home with a fiery red face, eyes sparkling with rage and quaking lips, spoke curtly to the mother, and then went into the chamber, closing the door after him. The mother became uneasy. For she saw clearly, that something must have

happened to provoke her usually quiet and self-possessed husband to such a degree. Timidly she knocked at the chamber door and begged admission; but no answer came from the father, and then she saw that she must wait quietly, until he would call her himself. For it was the habit of Father Miller, first to get himself somewhat composed before he would speak of things, that might have an unpleasant effect on those about him, and especially on his wife

With anxious heart the mother seated herself by the window, and carefully pondered in her mind what could be the cause of the father's excitement. Then she heard him walking up and down, at first with quick, heavy steps, which afterwards became slower and softer. From this fact she concluded that he had become composed, or had conquered the ill humor that had so stirred him up. It wasn't long before Father Miller opened the door, and beckoned to his wife to enter the chamber.

“Now, my dear,” said he, whilst with a smile he tried to dissipate the anxious care, which was clearly enough expressed in her eyes,—“now, my dear, here we have it. The Privy Counsellor Werthlos is a bad man, and the proposed nomination as Secretary of the Exchequer was nothing more than a bait to blind me and enlist me as his accomplice. But the miserable fellow reckoned without his host. No, although I am only a poor copyist, still I hold my honor as dear as any Counsellor or minister, and the hour is yet to come which will see me deviate from the path of rectitude, even though I should, as a consequence, be plunged into misery and ruin.”

“But what has happened?” asked the mother again, quite agitated.

“Sit down here and listen to me attentively; I will tell you the whole,” said Father Miller. “You shall also read the letter, which the tempter has written me, and then you will acknowledge that the whole affair of the Secretaryship of the

Exchequer is only a trap. As I was sitting quietly, yesterday, at my papers, Dietrich, the servant of the Privy-Counsellor, who was here a short time since, called to deliver a message from his master to Herr Hartmann, and handed me a letter so secretly, that no one noticed it. Old fool that I was: If I had only cast it at his feet: still I thought it were better first to see what it was, and the letter was put into my pocket. At noon, when I was coming home, I came around by the wall, read the letter, and immediately felt the blood of resentment and anger rising to my head. Now hear, how the matter stands. Herr Hartmann has to conduct a suit against the brother in law of the Privy-Counsellor, Herr von Schwertberg. It is about a property worth Fifty-thousand dollars, between brothers, and which the Herr von Schwertberg will not give up, although the property is just as little his as it is yours or mine. The papers relating to the whole case were delivered to me by Herr Hartmann some

weeks since, and the Privy-Counsellor, who has to defend his brother-in-law, heard this from Herr Hartmann's own lips. Now, you must know, that I suspected, from the very first, this business of the vacant Secretaryship of the Exchequer, and hence I warned you, that it was not so certain and sure as to be counted upon. But I could not say anything; and why? First for fear I might myself be mistaken, and might inflict on the Privy-Counsellor a flagrant wrong, by the suspicion that he was false; and next, because, as you are well aware, I do not readily speak, without occasion, of things which concern no one but Herr Hartmann and myself. Well, I also thought, when the time comes, proper counsel will come! You can always do as you please. You are still your own master. If the place is offered you, you would be a fool to reject it. If a man tries to buy your conscience, you can say good-by to him. I would rather remain a poor copyist on dry bread, than become

a well-paid Secretary with sin and disgrace. Well! Herr Hartmann gave me, among other papers, a document also, which plainly and clearly adjudges the property in question to the young Countess Kronberg—you know her, the poor orphan, whose mother died a year ago. Her guardian had entrusted the business to Herr Hartmann, and hence the whole story fell into my hands. If the opposition could have this document destroyed, then the claims of the Countess Kronberg would be without support, and there would be no use in having a trial. Now what does the cunning Privy-Counsellor do? He sends me this trash, in which he whisks about like a cat around a dish of hot soup, endeavoring to make me believe, with smooth words, that the document in question is spurious, and closing by asking me to send it to him, so that a most flagrant piece of injustice might not be done his brother-in-law. Yes, your most obedient servant: I shall now go back to Herr Hartmann, will

make a clean breast to him, show him the letter of the Privy-Counsellor, and tell him honestly and candidly what has transpired between the tempter and myself. That, in my opinion, is the most judicious thing, and I should have done it at first, had I not counselled the matter with you before."

Father Miller was silent, and his wife shook her head. "Now mind, husband dear," she said, "if this doesn't turn out to be a test, by which the Privy-Counsellor proposes to try your honesty. I can't imagine that so prominent a man could really be so wicked as to tempt you to commit a theft."

"So you think;" replied Father Miller, ironically. "May Heaven ever preserve you in that childlike disposition, which always will believe the best of other people; notwithstanding this—I can make an experiment. I can write him, that I will allow the document to pass from my hands, if instead of the secretary's place a situation in the Council should

be offered me. Yes, yes, then we will see indeed how the Privy-Counsellor will behave himself. Will you lay a wager, wife, that I shan't have the letter of appointment, to-morrow, in my hands?"

"Yes, husband dear, that I will!" rejoined the wife. "That I will unhesitatingly; for I well know, that the Privy-Counsellor will send you home with a long face, but will not make a Counsellor of you. Only try it!"

"It shall be done! It shall be done, and on the spot," said the father: "Bring me writing materials and paper quickly. I know my man, and I risk nothing in this. I wouldn't put my honor so thoughtlessly in the hands of an honest man, but a rascal can only be caught in his own trap. Quick, bring me pen and ink." Mother Miller brought the articles desired, and Father Miller wrote the following letter:

"To the right Honorable Privy Counsellor.

"Although I know as well as you, that the document in question is perfectly

valid in law, yet I am inclined to ensure its loss, if I could assure myself, that a service would thereby be rendered you—my much respected patron. But, as in order to oblige you, I shall certainly lose my place with Herr Hartmann, I must state conditions, so that I may secure suitable employment elsewhere. The place of the deceased Counsellor Erich on your Council Board is not yet filled, and I leave it to your decision, whether you would consider me and my abilities as suited for the fulfilment of the duties of such a position.

“Your most obedient etc. etc.”

The letter was sealed and sent by William. Father Miller went as usual to Herr Hartmann's office, and returned home about six o'clock in the evening. His wife hastened to meet him in the hall, and held up in her hand a large letter, sealed with five seals. “From the Privy-Counsellor. Just received!” she cried. “Dietrich has scarcely left the door.”

“Now we shall see how the sport goes!” replied Father Miller, smiling at the excitement and impatience of his wife. “Hold on, if your husband will only be a scoundrel, you can be called the Privy-Counsellor’s wife to-day yet.”

He took the letter, went with his wife into the chamber and broke the five seals, which fastened the letter. From the envelope there fell a small billet and a large sheet of manuscript. The latter Father Miller unfolded, gave it but one glance, and then handed it to his wife in silence. It was the appointment of the poor copyist as Counsellor, very correctly prepared, and even provided with the king’s signature. In the accompanying billet the following was written: “My worthy colleague; your wishes are so modest, and your abilities and talents, which I have represented with suitable zeal to his Majesty, our very gracious king, so great, that it affords me especial pleasure to transmit you your appointment. Your true zeal and well-known

attachment to the royal family have deserved this recognition for some time. I beg that you will make me a visit to-day, so that I may hear from your own mouth, that I have been successful in gratifying you, and don't forget to bring along the document in question. Your obedient etc. etc."

"Do you see the hypocrite now?" cried out Father Miller contemptuously. "Do you understand now, wife, what a rascal the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos is, and how justly and properly he deserves the name of *worthless*? Did I not tell you, that everything would turn out just as it has in fact occurred? Do you see now, what breeze was wafting the Secretary's appointment to me? Yes, Herr Privy-Counsellor, you have for once run stone blind, right into the trap! Do you see, wife, if I had been satisfied with the Secretary's place, the appointment perhaps would not have been so quickly made; for the sly fox had not considered me then bold enough for the business? But

when I asked the appointment of Counsellor, as a reward for treachery and rascality—that ensured it. He considers me now, on account of my shamelessness, as great a knave as himself, and therefore he does not suspect, that we have only been playing a trick on him. Now his eyes shall be fully opened; for I do not wish that such a scamp should think me his equal for a single night.”

He took the Patent, which appointed him to the King’s Council, from the hand of his wife, who remained seated stiff with amazement, sealed it up again very carefully, and endorsed on it the following:

“*Right Honorable Sir:* You are a distinguished rascal, and I am a poor, but honest copyist. *Because* I am such I return you the Patent. Do you keep your Counsellor’s appointment, and I will keep the document, which shall help the Countess Kronberg to her rights in spite of all your tricks. Your obedient servant—
Miller, the copyist.”

“There, take that to the Herr Privy-

Counsellor Werthlos," he said to his son, whom he found in the sitting-room. "An answer is not necessary."

William started off, and Father Miller returned to his wife, who was at length recovering her senses.

"There you have it," said he. "Only be glad that you didn't bet with me! If you had made the bet, you would have been obliged to pay it to the last penny."

"No, I never supposed, that there were men in the whole world so wicked," said Mother Miller.

"Indeed! Yes, yes, we are always thinking, that it is only the poor people who are wicked and have no consciences, and no honest hearts under their coarse clothes!" said Father Miller. "But no! wealth does not give these,—it is the fear of God such as springs from faith in Jesus Christ. And you may find *that* quite as often under a straw-thatch, as in the marble palaces of rich and noble lords! Indeed more frequently; for, oh, how often has the poor man,

no friend in the world but the dear Lord above in Heaven, who is the merciful Father of us all in Jesus Christ His Son. So long as they build on Him and hold fast to Him, so long they need have no fear, even if they know not, whence the scraps of bread shall come to satisfy the hunger of the next day. Well now! that's settled. Make a mark there. Come now to supper, my dear Counsellor's wife of half an hour."

With mock courtesy, Father Miller extended his arm to his brave wife and escorted her to the sitting-room, where Anna had prepared the table in the meantime. There was very little conversation on this subject during the rest of the evening. Both father and mother considered it as settled, and the fear, which Mother Miller entertained, was, that the Privy-Counsellor might seek to revenge himself on her husband, but the father met this with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders and these few words: "How can he harm me? I do

my duty honestly as far as is in my power, and for the rest I put my trust in Him, who is mightier than all men, be they Privy-Counsellors or what not."

Mother Miller was satisfied with this answer, and slept as sweetly and peaceably as though she never had had a prospect in her whole life, of being transformed from the wife of a poor copyist into the wife of a Counsellor. Father Miller had forgotten the whole story, the next morning, and went, as on other mornings, to his duties without thinking in the slightest manner that his honesty would still have to undergo a very severe test. And the trial was certainly severe, when it is recollected with what troubles the brave man had been obliged to contend, year in and year out. Father Miller knew, that he had done his duty, and as he considered this as nothing extraordinary, he never reflected whether there was any merit in it or not.



CHAPTER III.

A HEAVY BLOW.

SOME weeks after the occurrences which have been already narrated, Father Miller one morning entered the office of Herr Hartmann, wishing to begin his work as usual. But his desk had been put aside, the papers removed from it, and the cupboard, which contained the most important documents, had been locked.

“Zounds! what does this mean?” thought he. “This is wonderful confusion.”

No one was present, who could give him any explanation; for Father Miller was in the habit of being first at his work. As he couldn’t unravel the rid-

dle at present, he placed himself at the window, looked up the street to watch the people passing by, in order to occupy the time until the arrival of Herr Hartmann. The other clerks came in gradually, took places at their own desks and cast stolen glances at Father Miller, whose inactivity was novel and unheard of in the office. To his question, whether they knew who had taken away the key from his desk and removed the papers, they were not able to give an answer.

At length Herr Hartmann came. But instead of beginning his work, he looked at Father Miller with an earnest, angry look, and beckoning him to follow, led the way to his sitting-room.

“Out of respect for your age and the many years you have served under me,” he began with icy scorn, “I will communicate what I have to say here, and not in the presence of the other clerks. You are dismissed from my service and here”—placing a roll of coin on the table—

“is the pay due you. A man who would so basely and infamously betray my confidence, I do not wish to look upon any more. Take your money and leave me!”

Father Miller stood as if struck with lightning. It was indeed a stroke from a clear sky, and the brave man knew not whence it could have come to him. His countenance was pale as death, and some seconds elapsed before he could find words to inquire into the cause of this unlooked-for and entirely unexpected occurrence.

“For Heaven’s sake, Herr Hartmann, am I awake or do I dream?” he stammered out at last. “You do not mean to say, that I have deceived you in a base manner,—I, who have been your most faithful servant for so many years?”

“It is so much the worse, that you became a traitor in your old age!” answered Herr Hartmann. “Spare your words and protestations; for they can no longer deceive me. Here is your money—I hope you will not expect any testi-

monials of good conduct. It is enough, that I do not, through my excessive indulgence, publicly put you in the pillory."

"What! Traitor—Pillory? Are these the words to apply to me?" shrieked Father Miller, quite beside himself. Suddenly collecting himself, he approached Herr Hartmann, and looked him in the face with open, flashing eyes. "Herr Hartmann," said he, with a firm, determined voice; "it is only a poor copyist, who stands before you, but that poor copyist is an honorable man! You and I cannot leave this chamber, until I know the crime with which I am charged. From your service you can dismiss me, but you dare not heap disgrace and ignominy upon me. You shall speak, and I will defend myself. Miller, the old copyist, clings to his honorable name, and no man on earth shall calumniate him."

The firm resolution of the man, who had served him truly and honestly for many years, made some impression on Herr Hartmann.

"Well," said he, "I will place the proof of your infamy before your eyes, so that you can stand no longer before me as an insolent liar. Oh Miller, I, who ever wished you well, who unreservedly gave you my whole confidence,—I could never have believed, that I had nourished a serpent in my bosom, had the proof not been furnished me. Here see for yourself, and then disown it if you can!"

Herr Hartmann opened a drawer in his writing-table, took a paper from it, and held it before Father Miller's eyes. His face became alternately white and pale, a cry of anguish escaped his lips, and he raised his hands as if imploring help from Heaven. At the first glance, he discovered the letter which he had written some weeks before to the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos, and in which he had demanded the post of Counsellor, as the price for delivering the document in question. This miserable letter! How it could be misconstrued, if the exact

history of the whole affair were not known! Herr Hartmann was obliged to believe that Miller was guilty, that he was willing to betray his unbounded confidence, if by his treachery, he could only purchase a better and more agreeable position in the world. Father Miller, at first glance, knew that appearances were most decidedly against him, and this conviction crushed him so completely, that he could not utter a word, and hence he stood, not like an innocent man, but like a convicted traitor. As such, Herr Hartmann was naturally obliged to look on him, and, therefore, he deprived the old servant of each and every opportunity for defence and of all proof of his innocence, by saying: "Your agitation speaks clearly enough, to make any further proof unnecessary, especially as you acknowledge the crime. Leave my house, Sir, and recollect, that I will never more see you."

"But, Herr Hartmann"—began Father Miller, who had recovered from his pal-

sied horror, "only listen to me, and although I can present no proofs of my innocence to you, still you will see, that nothing was farther from my intention than the commission of a dishonest act."

"I will hear nothing, positively nothing!" said Herr Hartmann with emphasis. "It would give me still more pain to hear any lies from your mouth. Leave me, leave me, Herr Miller! This letter speaks more plainly than any words, as to your guilt. No more—I will not hear a word more!"

Father Miller made another attempt to establish his innocence, but Herr Hartmann turned his back on him contemptuously, and drummed with his fingers so loud on the panes of glass, that Father Miller found it impossible to make himself heard. The honest man's heart swelled with righteous indignation at this scornful treatment, which he could call God and man to witness he had not deserved. His pride was aroused. He recollected with what genuine self-sacri-

fice he had toiled for Herr Hartmann through so many years, and he was provoked, that he should now be condemned on a mere suspicion, which might after all only be a pretext.

“Herr Hartmann,” he said, at the same time seizing the arm of his remorseless Judge, in order to fasten his attention for at least a few seconds, “Herr Hartmann, you have done me injustice, and the time will yet come, when you will acknowledge that you have grievously injured old Miller without cause. I am an innocent, honest man, have been a faithful, zealous laborer in your service. What will become of me, after you have dismissed me so ignominiously, God alone knows. But I depart with fearless and trusting heart; for the good Lord still reigns, and He will establish my innocence. Farewell, Herr Hartmann! I leave you without anger or ill feeling; for your penitence and request for pardon will compensate me, at some future time, for these bitter hours.”

Father Miller waited for no answer, but departed with firm step and proud bearing. Herr Hartmann looked after him with astonishment. He had not believed, that Father Miller would leave him in that way. He supposed, he would have been able to dismiss a confessed guilty and ruined man, but now he almost felt as though he himself were the guilty person. He took a step towards the door, with the intention of calling back the faithful servant of many years, whom he had ignominiously dismissed, in order to hear his defence; but a glance at the unfortunate letter checked his course, and he muttered angrily to himself: "What good will it do? If the shameful fellow is able to excuse himself on the score of intention, the intention is still there, and that is reason enough for removing him. He is guilty, although he does not merit very severe punishment; for indeed, the temptation to wrong doing was great, the reward so attractive for a poor copyist, who could

barely make his daily support. It is enough, that I do not punish him more severely; enough, that I have had regard to long years of true attachment; and hence do not punish him with public contempt and scorn."

He locked the letter up again in his desk, and then went into his office, and here he soon appeared to have forgotten honest Father Miller, in the midst of important labors and duties.

But, in the meantime, what does poor, unhappy Father Miller do, now troubled with the bitterest cares as to his support? Pale and disturbed, he left the place, where he had worked and labored faithfully up to that time, and immersed in thought, took the road to his own little house. But as he was about opening the door, it occurred to him, how very much frightened his good wife would be, if he were to meet her suddenly and she were to read the disaster in his countenance. Therefore, he turned quickly back and took a walk through the neighboring

woods, in order first to secure control over his own sadness, and then to be able to appear before the partner of his life, with a more quiet spirit.

For more than an hour, he walked up and down through paths in the woods, shaded by the over-hanging boughs, and struggled for that composure, which he so much needed, seeking with a trembling, feverish spirit, some outlet from the distress, that had brought him to the verge of misery. What would become of his family, so suddenly deprived of its means of support? Where could he find another position or another occupation, after one, who had employed him for so many years, had driven him from his office, without furnishing a testimonial of his good behavior? Who would trust him, when they ascertained, that those, whom he so faithfully and diligently served, had no confidence in him?

In vain did Father Miller seek an answer to these questions. He saw nothing before him but poverty, misery,

scorn, ignominy and the fearful spectre of hunger. And all this, with the conscious feeling, that he had honestly performed his duty, and had done nothing in violation of law or conscience. The thought, "I am innocent," gave him at length new strength.

"The good Lord still reigns," he repeated, and folded his hands. "He looks into my heart. He knows my most secret thoughts and feelings. He knows my innocence of the crime, with which I have been charged, and it will be a small matter for Him to show my innocence, when the proper day and hour arrives." "Oh great God," he prayed, "give me strength through Thy dear Son, to endure this visitation! From Thee comes whatever rejoices or grieves us! Then will I hold fast to the belief, that this cup comes from Thy fatherly hand, and in this belief will I abide until Thou removest it from my lips. What Thou dost is well done, and therefore, although I fear, yet will I not despair."

As a prayer to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven, flowing forth from the depths of a resigned and trusting heart, ever brings back a salutary peace to the storm-tossed soul, so Father Miller now found that calmness, which would enable him to appear before his wife and children, with a quiet countenance. His heart indeed was full of fear, but he did not despair; and although he knew no more now than before how his family was to be supported, he hoped, nevertheless, that the good Lord would show him ways and means, so that he could at least ward off extreme misery from the heads of his dear ones. Peaceful and resigned, in this hope, he went home and appeared before his wife with a face slightly pale, but with bright eyes.

“Mother,” said he, “the good Lord lays on us a heavy trial. Strengthen your heart with faith and courage, for it must needs be strong, in order to bear the blow, which has fallen upon us, without any fault of ours.”

“For Heaven’s sake, what has happened?” asked Mother Miller. “Our children—”

“No, our suffering is not as great as that,” said the father, catching up the sentence. “The children are, God be thanked! all well; but, compose yourself, Herr Hartmann has dismissed me from his service.”

The painful words had been spoken, and Father Miller breathed with his customary ease, after they had escaped from his struggling breast. He supposed, that the mother would burst into tears and exclamations of grief. But no! instead of complaining, she only said; “God be praised, that nothing has happened to the children! I feared some misfortune had befallen them!”

After a little while, it occurred to her, that this event was also a great misfortune, and then she grew pale and asked: “But how has this happened, husband, dear?”

Father Miller told his tale. While he

was speaking, one tear after another moistened the mother's eyes: and when she knew the whole, she wept in silence before him. He, with his hands crossed behind his back and his head bowed, as was his custom, walked up and down the small room. He suffered his wife to weep for a few minutes; then approached her, seized her hand and pressing it gently, said in a softened tone: "Don't take it so hard, dearest! Think only of your own proverb, of which you have so often reminded me, 'The good Lord still reigns!' He will grant help, when the children of men can see none."

"Ah, husband, dear, I am not weeping on that account," replied Mother Miller, and she raised her streaming eyes to gaze upon her spouse. "I weep only, because I—I alone am responsible for the whole misfortune! Had I not believed so firmly in the honorable intentions of the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos, the unfortunate letter would not have been written, and you would, as usual, have taken

the straight road, which is always, even as we now see, the best. My poor, dear husband, can you forgive me, since my folly has brought all this trouble upon your head?"

Mother Miller looked up into the eyes of her husband, anxiously and imploringly; but she discovered no resentment or ill-will there, and if she had indeed supposed, that Father Miller would lay the whole blame on her, that look convinced her of her error.

"Do not trouble and grieve yourself about such things. They will only make your heart sad without cause," said Father Miller. "If there is any one to be blamed, it is I; for I should have reflected seriously as to the effects of a letter, such as I wrote the Privy-Counsellor, when turned against me. But then I did not think, that the revenge of a wicked man could go so far as to destroy the innocent. What has happened, has happened with God's permission; therefore, we will not torment ourselves with self-

reproaches and unnecessary thoughts and reflections, as to whether this or that might have been done or avoided. It is enough, that our consciences are clear; we are not guilty in fact or in intention, of that with which I have been charged, and it is this, next to our trust in the Most High, which must tend to our consolation in suffering."

"And this consciousness is a right powerful and effective consolation," said Mother Miller, smiling amid her tears, whilst she embraced her humbled, but not despairing spouse. "You are right: The good Lord still reigns! and we will look up to Him, raise our hearts to Him, through faith in His dear Son, so that we may remain firm and endure courageously whatever is to be endured. Have no care for the morrow, husband, dear! There lives One above us, who has cared for us through many a year, and will still care for us to the end of life. To those who love God, you well know, all things must turn out for the best; and so let us hope

and believe, that, even now as ever before, this promise will be fulfilled!"

"Amen! Amen! So may it be!" said Father Miller, and with a more peaceful heart than one could have supposed, he discussed with his wife what was next to be done, in order to obtain at least the necessaries of life, until it would please the Lord to open up before the poor ones, a clearer and more joyful prospect in the future. Thus they sat and conversed, until the children returned home at noon from school, and clamored noisily as usual for their dinner. Conversation was then naturally broken off; but the father and mother had so mastered their feelings, that William, the oldest boy, could scarcely discover any traces of the storm, that had just passed over the souls of his beloved parents.





CHAPTER IV.

WILLIAM AND ANNA.

BUT, mother, why do we have black bread to-day with our milk, instead of fresh wheat bread?" asked little Albert weeping, and pushing the piece of bread away, which his mother had given him.

The mother attempted a faint smile, but the attempt was so little successful, that the observant William felt its constrained character, as he noticed it. In order to spare his mother an explanation, he ate a piece of the bread heartily, and said pleasantly: "Don't cry, Albert! Fie, why do you make such an ugly face? There now, try the bread and eat it! It tastes just as good as wheat bread, and besides, it is much stronger."

Albert tried the bread, but didn't seem of the same opinion with William. He remained cross; his face became broader and broader, until at last he was about to cry out right lustily, when his father interfered, and ordered the dainty little fellow in such an authoritative way to eat his bread properly, that, without further ceremony, he suppressed his tears and dropped the bread into his milk.

The simple breakfast was soon consumed, when Father Miller arose and grasped his hat.

"Come with me, William," he said. "I want to talk with you."

William was ready at once, and followed his father into the garden back of the house, where the latter told him, in few words, that he had lost his place without any fault of his, and as it was likely they would be without means of subsistence for some time, it was necessary to use the strictest economy.

"You are an intelligent boy, William," he said, "and I can speak with you with-

out reserve. Now, I know very well that you are anxious to continue your studies, and if the attainment of your wishes could be secured by any sacrifice from your parents, they would be made with the greatest pleasure. But you see, William, there is not even the slightest prospect, and, therefore, this is the reason I speak to you now, that you may think whether you cannot, in some other way, obtain a living in the future."

William had become quite pale, while his father was telling him this. It had always been his heartfelt desire, and most ardent longing, to devote himself to his favorite studies. And now, the whole structure of his bright dreams had been overthrown by one word.

"Oh father," said he, "is it absolutely impossible for me to go on? Indeed I would do double work very willingly and deprive myself of almost everything, if I could only remain with my books."

The father shrugged his shoulders. "I see no hope for you, my poor boy," he re-

plied with tender compassion. "It would be difficult, if not quite impossible, in our present circumstances, even to pay for your tuition."

"But, father, suppose the Director would take me as a free scholar? If I could only attend school, without pay, for one year longer! Only one year more—one short year! In that time so many things might change; and if not—well! there still will be time enough for me to learn a trade, or perhaps some other business."

Father Miller shook his head, and notwithstanding his tender sympathy for his boy, would have given another denial, had not the mother, at this moment, come up to them and put the finishing stroke to the business.

"Grant his request, father," she said. "The poor boy will certainly grieve himself to death, if he is obliged to throw away his fondly cherished books in order to take the plane or chisel, and it would be a thousand pities, if all the work of

his early years, his hard-earned knowledge, did not bear him any fruit. Let us try it, and hope, that the dear Lord will sustain us in it. Let us not burden ourselves with more labor and economy than is necessary, and William will then so much the more joyfully and happily strike out some other road for securing his future, when he himself, can say, that nothing had been neglected towards satisfying his wishes."

William looked at his father with a countenance radiant with joy, and the latter could not resist his silent but eloquent appeal.

"Well! let us try it," he said. "In no event will the knowledge acquired by our William be lost, and whatever position he may attain, this will sooner or later be profitable."

William embraced his parents with ardent affection, and tears of joy sparkled in his eyes, as he vowed to requite their enduring love and kindness, with the most earnest application of all his faculties. Happy at heart, he betook himself

immediately to the School-Director, and applied for free instruction for one year. The request was immediately granted him with friendly words, on account of his constant good behavior, and William, highly elated, communicated the good news to his parents, who saw in it a happy omen for the future.

“Now, don’t you see,” said Mother Miller to her husband, “the good Lord still reigns, and will further help us.”

“Yes, that I hope, with all my soul,” replied the father. “But, on that account, we must not neglect anything that is proper or possible. I will go out and look around to see if I can find a new situation.”

He pressed the hands of his wife and child, and then went away to seek a situation, such as he had filled for so many years with Herr Hartmann, the Notary. The mother betook herself to the house, and William, beckoning his sister Anna, went with her to the large elder-bush at the extreme end of the garden.

“Anna,” he said, “do you know, that our dear, good father has lost his situation?”

“Yes, indeed, William,” replied the girl. “Mother told me of it a little while ago, and that we must live very sparingly and learn to economize in everything.”

“That we must, indeed, my dear, little sister,” said William. “But see, we can even do more than that. We can take away from our parents a portion of their crushing cares, and not only economize but even help them!”

“Help them, William! Money will help them. Can we give that to our parents?” cried Anna, in a joyful state of excitement. “Oh brother, if it were only possible, I would work night and day. Tell me only, how and in what manner.”

“Listen, and I will tell you; for I have brought you here for that purpose,” replied William. “Do you see out there, in front of our house, that beautiful large house with green shutters, which we have so often admired? You recollect?”

Anna nodded. "It has a flower-window, where even in mid-winter the prettiest flowers are placed," she said. "But what is there about the house?"

"Well now, in that house there lives a rich man, the Book-seller Ehrlich, who prints and publishes picture-books, than which you can scarcely imagine anything more beautiful. I have a school-companion, Fritz Rauscher, who tells me, that his mother gets a quantity of pictures from Herr Ehrlich every week, which she colors, and gets enough money for the work to support herself and her son nicely. He told me also, that Herr Ehrlich was a very kind, good man, pleasant and friendly to every body; and then it occurred to me, that I would go to him and ask if he would give me some pictures to color: and then, if you and I would get up early in the morning, and paint right diligently, could we not make a little money for father and mother?"

"Oh William, if that only could be

done!" exclaimed Anna, clapping her hands with joy. "If Herr Ehrlich would trust his beautiful pictures to us. How grand it would be! And indeed, we could do that work. We have already painted so much, and the more industriously we work at it, the better we shall be able to do it. It is very certain that we can make some money that way. But you must recollect Herr Ehrlich doesn't know us. He won't give us the work!"

"That may be so, Anna, but I will at least try," said William. "Take care and say nothing about this to father and mother, before we have earned some money together. They mustn't know anything about the whole plan, until it is fully under way."

"I will take good care," added Anna. "No, no, our parents must be surprised, completely and fully surprised! There will be a jubilation, when we bring them the bright pieces of money."

William nodded, and looked pleasantly at his sister. "I am so glad," he said, "that you are ready to help me."

“Why should I not? You didn’t doubt it?” rejoined Anna. “Oh William, what a wicked girl I should be, if I should forget what our good parents have done for us, and how great a debt of gratitude we owe them. Day and night I would work only to show how I love them.”

“Yes, indeed, Anna, you are a brave, good girl!” said William, giving his sister a hearty kiss. “In fact, I never doubted you for an instant; yet I thought you wouldn’t like to get up so early as we must, if we wish to furnish some substantial help. Now only keep perfectly silent, and I will go directly to Herr Ehrlich’s. We can work splendidly in our little garret-room, without being noticed by father and mother, and then—when we come home with our pay—that will give them pleasure. I already feel the joy of it.”

“And I also,” said Anna. “Only go, William, go! We can even begin tomorrow, if Herr Ehrlich will trust his pictures to us.”

William put on his cap and started. During his absence, Anna collected all their brushes and color-shells, carried them up to the garret-room, and then went with her work out into the garden and there waited her brother's return. One hour passed, and then a second,—noon was near at hand, and still nothing could be seen or heard of William. Anna began to feel sad; for she believed that her joy had been premature, and that William had been refused by Herr Ehrlich. But suddenly a rustling was heard behind the arbor, and William, pushing his head through the leaves of the elder bushes, asked, in a low tone of voice—"Is any one in the garden?"

"No one but I!" answered Anna. "But how did you succeed, William?"

"Well, very well!" cried the boy, and his eyes flashed with delight. "Only wait a minute and you shall hear all. But take this package, first."

He pushed the package through under the garden pailings, and Anna seized it with great joy; for its whole appearance

showed, that it contained the pictures. William then went around the garden, came in through the house, and carried the package in at the back door, so that his mother should not see it, up-stairs to the garret-room, where he placed it in an old chest, and carefully took the key away with him. Then he hurried back to his sister, who patiently waited both his return and his story.

“Now be quick,” said she. “How did you succeed, William? But how is this—you are all wet?”

“Don’t trouble yourself about that,” replied William. “If I hadn’t been made wet, it would have gone quite badly with me. But now listen. I went to see Herr Ehrlich, and entered his house with an anxious but hopeful heart. I was not after anything wrong, but only wished to ask for work, and that was no disgrace. A servant, who was carrying a great roll of paper on his back, showed me into the counting-room, when I told him I wished to see Herr Ehrlich.

“When I knocked at the door, ‘Come in,’ cried some one from the inside sharply, and, although frightened at the loud voice, I obeyed the invitation, and then, you may well believe, Anna, I began to lose my courage. There were several gentlemen in the counting-room.—One of these, with spectacles on his nose, turned towards me, and very coolly asked—‘What are you wanting?’ ‘I wish to speak with Herr Ehrlich,’ said I. ‘I am he,’ answered the man with the spectacles, and looked so sharply at me, that I became quite confused and was scarcely able to talk. He asked me once more what I wanted with him, and who I was, and then I stammered out my request. ‘It cannot be, my dear!’ he said, shrugging his shoulders. ‘I am already supplied with enough colorists, and then—you seem to me to be so young, that I couldn’t trust my pictures to you with any confidence.’

“Oh, Anna, when Herr Ehrlich told me that, I was ready to cry and indeed

would have burst into tears, if I hadn't been ashamed to do so before the gentlemen in the counting-room. Still I collected myself, and asked Herr Ehrlich once more, that he would only give me a fair trial, promising to take right good care to satisfy him. But it was of no use: Herr Ehrlich persisted in his refusal, and turned away from me to his books. I saw that nothing more was to be done there. Sadly I said good-morning, and crept out of the house with such a heavy heart, that I thought I could never more be happy. But hear now, what occurred. Instead of running back immediately to you, I went down to the pond, that is not far from Herr Ehrlich's house. You know where it is? and seated myself in the bushes. There, Anna, I wept; yes, I couldn't restrain the tears; and then I thought—'Herr Ehrlich isn't as good and friendly, as Fritz Rauscher told me he was. He might have tried me, at least once.' While I was sitting there and thinking such thoughts, a party of

little boys, with butterfly-nets, came down and were fishing with them in the pond. At first, I paid no attention to them; but you can't understand of what importance these youngsters were to me. Suddenly I heard one of them scream out: 'My net! my net!' and looking sharply, I saw his net floating on the water, while the other boys, instead of reaching out for it, managed so stupidly, that they were only pushing it further off. Notwithstanding my own troubles, I pitied the poor little fellow, crying so piteously for his net, and springing up, I ran to him and said: 'Don't cry so. I'll get it for you.' The little fellow hushed up, and stared at me with astonishment. Taking one of the other boy's nets, I reached out carefully after that which was floating. I might not have been careful enough, or a stone may have given way under my feet.—In short, I slipped, and *splash!* there I was up to my neck in water, and it was a blessing then that I could swim. The little fellows screamed out with pure fright, while

I thought: 'You are wet now.—You had better be wet for some purpose. Swim after the net and bring it with you to the shore.' Then you should have heard the shouts, which the little fellows gave me. I gave the little one his net, and was about running off quickly to dry my clothes at home, when a man, whom I recognized at first glance from the spectacles on his nose as Herr Ehrlich, came around the corner. The screaming had brought him out, and he probably thought, some accident had happened. He found out, in a few words from the boys, what was the matter. The first thing he did, was to give the little boy, whose net had fallen into the water, a right good box on the ear, and then he came and looked at me sharply from head to foot.

“‘Aha!’ said he abruptly, ‘are you not the young man, who asked me, a few hours ago, for some pictures to color?’

“I felt that my face was as red as blood, and nodded my head.

“So, so ; well, come then, my little son, I will try you once. He who leaps into the water from compassion for a screaming boy, deserves that one should engage him. Come with me.’

“But, Anna, I tell you, I was heartily glad, when I heard Herr Ehrlich talking that way, and I retracted all the injustice I had done him in thought. He asked me what were my parents’ names, where I lived and whatever else he wanted to know, and at last gave me a large package of pictures, and said, if I understood the business and took pains, I should have as much coloring to do as I wished. Of course, I thanked him for his kindness, took the package under my arm, and—here I am. To-morrow we can begin, if we please.”

“And we shall certainly please !” said Anna, joyously. “We will work very diligently, so that Herr Ehrlich shall be satisfied with us, and we may earn a great deal of money. But now take off your coat, William. It will soon get dry here

in the sun, and then you need not tell how it became wet."

"You are right, otherwise the fun would be spoiled at the very beginning," said William, and he spread his wet cloth coat on the turf. By noon it was again in good condition, and, when the father came home and seated himself with his family at the table to eat his potatoes and salt with them, no one asked how William had spent the morning. Moreover, the father didn't notice much of anything, but looked very sad and out of humor, and scarcely said a word to his family during the meal.





CHAPTER V.

HAPPY IS THE MAN WHO LIVES TO SEE JOY
IN HIS CHILDREN.

EXACTLY one week after the incidents narrated in the last chapter, Father Miller and his wife were sitting, in the afternoon, under the same elder-bushes, where Anna had so anxiously awaited the return of her brother. The bright sun shone clear and pleasant on the beautiful, variegated flowers of the garden, while here and there, through the thick foliage of the elder-bushes, a bright ray fell, marking curiously-formed figures of light on the table. All was light and pleasant. Everything rejoiced in life. The butterflies played antics from flower to flower, a greenfinch sang with jubilant voice on

the branches of the neighboring apple-tree, beetles of all kinds had collected together and were whizzing joyously through the air warmed by the rays of the sun which passed through it. Father Miller was the only one, who remained sad in the midst of this gayety, resting his head, heavy with cares, on his hand, and sighing deeply.

“It’s all to no purpose, mother!” he said, after an interval of anxious silence. “I have run all the day, from post to pillar, and have been turned away everywhere with empty words. I see no other prospect before us, than that afforded by the beggar’s staff.”

Any one could have seen, that the mother’s soul was not happy; but still she knew how to find friendly words, which might be consolatory to her distressed husband. “If you are anxious, dear husband, you mustn’t be discouraged,” she said with a soft, gentle voice. “‘When need is greatest, help is nearest,’ the proverb promises; and if the help is not yet

here, you must recollect, that the need has not yet become intensely great."

"Ah, mother, you don't believe yourself what you are saying," replied Father Miller sadly. "What shall be done at last? The little pittance, which Herr Hartmann paid me, is daily becoming more and more slender, and the sun shines now without any obstacle whatever through the meshes of your money-purse. To live more sparingly than at present we cannot, unless we wish to starve. I can find work with no one, although I have actually begged for it; and with constant flowing out and nothing coming in, the largest pond must at last become empty. How much sooner will it not be at an end with our little cash?"

"Patience, husband, dear, patience," answered the mother. "You are known throughout the whole city, as an honest, hard-working man, so that I can't help but feel you must sooner or later find a situation."

"Find a situation! Oh, mother, only

give up such ambitious thoughts!" said Father Miller. "It is not to be thought of. No one will trust me even with anything to copy. Oh, Herr Hartmann and the Herr Privy-Counsellor Werthlos have taken pains to deprive me of the respect and confidence of all good men. It is now, wife, my greatest grief, that every body looks on me as a scoundrel and a rascal, that I have not only lost my situation, but my honorable name also! Oh, wife, if all men knew how sickening and painful it is to be treated with contempt when one is innocent, they would not be so precipitate in their judgments and condemnations."

"That is indeed the bitterest drop in our cup of sorrows," replied the mother. "But, do not forget that there is a Supreme Judge in Heaven, who will certainly bring thy innocence to light, just as certainly and truly as you are innocent. The good Lord still reigns, husband, dear!"

"Yes, mother, that is still my only

comfort," said Father Miller. "If I did not know that I still have a friend, One who sticks closer than a brother—One who loves me and looks into my heart and knows my inmost thoughts, I should be forced to succumb under the burden of my misery. You do not know even all that hangs over us. I have kept concealed in my breast up to this time a very bitter piece of sorrowful news, because I was hoping that the blow might yet be warded off. But it is of no use. You must find it out, and therefore, rather now than later."

"What now?" asked Mother Miller perplexed. "What else has happened?"

"It can be told in a few words," replied the father. "Herr Waldmann, who advanced us the sum of one thousand dollars on our house, told me, day before yesterday, that he had sold my bond to the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos, and the Privy-Counsellor, to make the measure of my misfortune complete, demands the principal from me on the day it is due."

“Now,” continued Father Miller, his poor wife having become perfectly pale with terror, “now, see, how basely and scandalously the Privy-Counsellor is acting. He knows better than we, that, at the present time, when brokers rarely loan and there is a scarcity of money everywhere, I cannot borrow from any one, and therefore, he demands the principal from me, so that he can have the greatest revenge, and thus drive me out of the house. This lies more heavily on my heart than I can tell you, because the house has belonged to our family for centuries, having been handed down from father to son.

“I have tried to borrow money, but no one will lend me, as every one knows, that I have no situation, and therefore, fears I will not be able to pay the interest. It is of no use, mother. We must leave these four walls, within which we have lived so many happy years. We must turn our backs on them and leave them in the hands of our enemy, who desires

to press me to the ground and to destroy me with my wife and children. Well, let that be so! The good Lord will know how to find him out and punish him. That's what I wish and hope for."

"No, no, husband, dear!" said Mother Miller, drying the tears which, despite all her efforts to prevent, were flowing from her eyes, "wish no evil to your enemy? You would then, as the Gospel tells us, be as bad as he is! No, no, the blow is indeed heavy, which strikes us so unexpectedly, but the Lord tempers the wind even to the shorn lamb, and has He not also promised us His protection and help? It is sad, yes, so sad that I can't express my feelings at the thought of leaving our dear, little house. But yet, the good Lord still reigns, husband, dear, and whatever takes place, can only come upon us with His permission. Be comforted. The wounds which the Lord inflicts, He also heals with a gentle hand, if we look up to Him with a firm trust. Be comforted, and do not despair; for

help is perhaps nearer than we short-sighted mortals think or anticipate."

Troubled as Father Miller was, the gentle persuasion, the confident words of comfort of his wife did not fail of their effect. He lifted up his bowed-down head with courage, pressed tenderly the hand of his brave wife, and said, with a look of heart-felt love: "Truly, truly, to him whom the Lord loves is given a brave, good wife as the companion of his life! It is at least a sweet fruit of our bitter sufferings, that I am learning to know your heart better, and becoming more and more convinced, how greatly the good Lord has blessed me through you. Yes, dear wife, when in distress we shall not despair; for *the good Lord still reigns*, and He—He shall be our protection, shield and defence, though all mankind should despise, persecute and injure us!"

Indeed it was a rich and glorious treasure, which the distressed man possessed in his true wife. But God had given him not only this joy for comfort

in suffering; both he and his wife had another, which they had by no means expected. With plans for the immediate future, with determinations to spare and retrench still more, wherever it was possible, several hours were consumed, and the sun was setting very rapidly, when the garden-gate opened, and the two oldest children, William and Anna, entered the garden with countenances glowing and radiant with delight. They rushed to the arbor, where their parents were sitting, and approached them with flashing eyes.

“Father, mother—” began William, “only guess what I have in my hand!”

The parents smiling shook their heads, and Father Miller said they might think a long time before they could find out.

“Only look here,” cried William, and holding his closed hand towards his parents, he opened it just a very little, so that a white surface could be seen shining within.

“Perhaps you have gathered some

white pebbles, William?" said the father.

"No, something much better!"

"Well then, tell us my dears—mother and I can't guess it."

He waggishly laughed, while the father and mother winked with their eyes. That he might not wait longer for an expression of pleasant astonishment, William opened his hand slowly, and—there two white newly coined solid silver dollars met his parents' eyes.

"For Heaven's sake, William, where did you get that money?" asked the parents, really more frightened than rejoiced in the first minute.

"Did you find it, or perhaps st—," added the father?

"No, father, no!" interrupted the very happy boy. "I have earned it; honestly earned it—Anna and I. Indeed it is true. Don't you believe it? And what is more, we can earn as much every week, without your knowing how, unless we tell you."

"Earned it? You and Anna?" asked Father Miller, very much astonished. "But how then?"

And as if the children had only been waiting for the question, they began quickly to tell, mixing up Herr Ehrlich and butterfly-nets and pictures so completely, that Father Miller became quite confused, although he ascertained so much as to learn, that the bright dollars at least reached the hands of his children honestly. After a little while, he became aware of the fact, that William and Anna had been employing their morning hours so profitably during the preceding week, that they had colored most of the pictures obtained from Herr Ehrlich, and that they had carried them to him to-day, and received two dollars as their honestly-earned pay.

The highly delighted parents heard this account with eyes flashing with pleasure, rejoicing more on account of the self-sacrificing love and affection of their brave children, than at the money

which they had earned for them so honestly. They embraced both affectionately in their arms, and the father, with a voice trembling with excitement, said: "God bless you, my dear children! God bless you! Indeed this is a great and supporting consolation the Lord has sent me through you, to quicken and raise up my depressed soul!"

"Don't you see, husband, dear?" cried the delighted mother, while a tear of joy sparkled in her eye, "don't you see? The good Lord still reigns, and sends his blessings in streams over us, without our being able to anticipate whence they will come."

"Yes, indeed," replied Father Miller, "the goodness of the Lord is great and, therefore, when distress comes, we shall not despair."

The children, who had so completely accomplished the surprise they wished, rejoiced no less than the happy parents, and determined, with joyous hearts, that they would continue the little occupa-

tion they had undertaken, with a diligence equal to that already manifested.

“And we, that is, I at least will become a scholar with you,” said Father Miller. “This old hand, that has held a pen so long, will also learn to manage the brush, and so I may earn at least something, until the good Lord will help me to my customary employment.”

“And I shall not remain behind and play the idler, while you are employing your hands so busily,” added the mother. “With a little practice we can all together do twice as much as the children alone, and then we shall have no mean income. Four dollars a week—we won’t starve on that, and besides we can have a little for the necessary clothing. Take comfort, William, if there is no prospect now of your being able to continue your studies for more than a year—a year is a long time, and many things may happen during it, of which we neither know nor can conjecture anything. Above everything, I hope the innocence of your honest fa-

ther shall be brought to light, as clear as the sun, and—this being accomplished—then all need and sorrow will be at an end. Only have patience! The good Lord still reigns, and no web can be so cunningly made, that He cannot unravel it. No wicked man escapes condemnation, and no innocent man lives, whose innocence shall not be made apparent at last!”

The father and children were happy at heart, as though they didn't doubt for an instant the prophecies of the mother. In the hope, that these might, one day, be fulfilled, they devised new, prudent plans for the future; built castles—or to speak more truly—only a small cottage in the air, and longed for nothing more, than that the good Lord might always preserve their glad hearts and firm faith, wherewith they could look with clear eyes into the future, when other dark clouds should threaten their earthly heaven and disturb the modest, good fortune, they now enjoyed, although they had lost so much.

The father and mother devoted a few days to the minor details and secrets of the art of coloring, and vied with the children in rapid, and, at the same time, neat and skillful execution. Herr Ehrlich expressed himself satisfied with the work, which was returned, and promised William still more, if he did not flag in his zeal. Some weeks, the money earned by the family exceeded four dollars, and if no great amount was made, still the small sum was sufficient to secure the most indispensable necessities of life. It is true, the mother was not able to procure new clothing, William was obliged to wear his father's old pilot-cloth coat in the middle of summer, and the father himself was obliged to fasten the uppers of his boots still more ingeniously, because new soles or new boots were out of the question. But notwithstanding all this, in the house of the deposed copyist Miller, nothing was to be seen but happy faces. They held firm hold of faith and hope in God,—their hearts were often

sad, but they never despaired; and if Father Miller ever looked sad, the mother, with a glance towards Heaven, said, "The good Lord still reigns," and then, the sadness disappeared from his countenance, and, with a thankful smile, he pressed the hand of the comforting mother. They were poor, but still happy; for contentment maintained its sway in their hearts.





CHAPTER VI.

THE GRANDFATHER'S PORTRAIT.

THE fact, that they could not prevent the sale of their dear little house, was the greatest, or more properly speaking, the only actual sorrow that troubled the thoughts of the family. They had all, even the mother herself, grown up in it, and every nook and corner in the house was near and dear to them; for there was no portion not connected with agreeable memories. They would have made the greatest sacrifices to retain that little piece of property. Father Miller had been to see the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos to beg indulgence and forbearance for a year or two longer; but the wicked man, having nothing else in

view, than revenge on the copyist, was inflexible. The severe struggle, which Father Miller had with himself, before he could resolve to ask the sympathy of his destroyer, had been undertaken in vain, and the mother was obliged to console him, in order to transform the father's ill humor, into his customary, quiet peacefulness and content. With the hope of neglecting nothing, that might avert the threatened disaster, Father Miller had gone around among all his acquaintances at least ten times, to see whether he could not borrow the necessary sum of money; but his sad journeys had brought no favorable results. The time was drawing nearer and nearer, when they should be driven from their little house, and the eyes of all rested with secret, quiet sadness, on the four familiar walls, within which they had experienced so many incidents—both sad and happy, as the Lord had sent them.

“Now, children,” said the father, one evening, when he had returned home,

“that’s attended to. I have rented a residence for us, and to-morrow we will begin to get our little furniture and goods ready.”

“Well, our trust is in God,” said the mother, after a short silence, during which all tried to suppress their painful thoughts; “what can’t be cured must be endured with firmness and resignation. If many things shall be wanting us, especially our little garden—why, as we have found pleasure in these, should we not bear some pain?”

“And what way shall we go, father?” asked William.

“Right out through the door,” he replied. “And, mother, do not grieve so much about the garden; for this one will be compensated for by another belonging to the house. True, it must first be dug up, and then regularly laid out, because the whole property is in a very much neglected condition. The little house, of which I am speaking, belongs to the merchant Hellwig, who has no

use for it, and rents it to me on that account for a very small sum."

"Oh! I know it," cried William. "It's a short distance beyond Herr Ehrlich's house, and, as often as I have passed by it, the window-shutters have always been closed. The little house is not beautiful, father, but it is very prettily located. It is in the midst of a green plat, mother, and there must be a very pretty view from the house."

"At any rate," said the father, "the rent is low, and that is the main consideration. Herr Hellwig only asks twenty dollars a year, and we can raise that without very much trouble, if the good Lord will only preserve our health."

Much more was said about the little house, and William made many plans—how it could be arranged right neatly and comfortably without any expense, and solely by the work of his hands. The father and mother, being occupied with their own thoughts, at first listened only with half attention; bye and bye

they took more interest in the plans, and finally joined in the discussion. At length some enthusiasm was excited, and every one began to feel some interest in the new house, and, when they retired for the night, sadness, on account of the loss of the home, which they had occupied so long, had not indeed disappeared, but it had been wonderfully mitigated.

Early the next morning, every one was occupied with moving out and in. The father betook himself to the new house, in order to arrange furniture and other household affairs in suitable places, and the mother superintended the moving from the old home. Anna was busily employed. A laboring man removed the heavy pieces of furniture on a wheelbarrow, and William carried the light articles. Towards evening everything was done, and the father returned with William to take a last farewell of the house. They went once more through the garden and all the rooms. Their feelings were very sad, as they stood upon

the sill which they were about to cross for the last time, never more to return.

The sun had half disappeared below the horizon; its last golden rays fell through the glass and shone on the walls of the sitting-room, on which the lingering parents were about turning their backs. A bright ray of sunlight shone clearly on a little picture, fastened high up against the wall, which had been overlooked in the removal of their effects.

"The picture, father!" cried William. "The portrait of our great-grandfather! We must take that with us. No, indeed, that must not remain here."

The parents turned around at these words of William, and looked up at the picture, on which the sun still shone bright and clear.

"Certainly, William, you are right," said the father. "The old gentleman must not be left hanging there, although the frame is fastened to the wall. Only see, he looks at us, as is natural, full of indignation, because we forgot him. Bring

me quickly a chisel and hammer, William, while I borrow a ladder from a neighbor."

Chisel, hammer and ladder were, in a few minutes procured, and the father climbed up to the old picture, whose frame he tried to loosen from the wall. But it was fastened very tightly, and, without rough treatment of the wall, the picture could not be removed.

"This is very provoking," said Father Miller, leaving his arm fall, while in doubt and hesitation he looked at the others. "It will certainly cost us half a dollar to make the wall good again, and we haven't too much money on hand. Still my heart protests against leaving the picture, where it may perhaps be very soon daubed over by a rough hand with white-wash, if not entirely destroyed."

"No, no. Don't leave it here, father," entreated the children with one voice; and even the thrifty mother thought it would be better to sacrifice twelve grosch-

en than the pretty picture—such an honorable, old family piece.

“I think,” said she, “it must please the great-grandfather even now, that we should think so much of his memory. Take the picture down, husband, dear!”

“Just as you wish it,” answered the father, and he went to work again. “It would have pained me very much, if I had left the beautiful picture behind, on account of a few groschen.”

With strong but careful hand, so as not to injure the frame of the picture, he chiseled and hammered at the wall, while the little pieces of stone and mortar fell at his feet. After a few minutes, the frame hung only loosely on the wall, when the chisel being placed behind the frame, the father took the picture out uninjured.

“There, I have it,” he said, a cloud of dust flying out from behind the picture. “Take it from me, William, so that I can come down.”

William sprang quickly up the steps of

the ladder, seized the picture and brought it down with a careful hand, when an exclamation from his father, mother and sisters startled him.

“What’s the matter?” he asked.

“There is a large hole in the wall, which the picture covered like a door,” replied the father. “Only see! it is made of regular mason-work; but what’s this?”

He looked curiously in and extended his hand into the opening from which the dust had come. The next minute he brought out a piece of yellow paper, covered with writing faded by age.

“What have you there, father? what is it?” asked mother and children with one voice.

The father cast a short quick glance at the paper, and then plunged his hand again in the hole, from which he drew out a moderately large leather purse.

“Children, this is a wonderful discovery,” he said. “William, first put the picture aside where it will not be injured,



and then take this purse. It seems to me there are others also concealed in the hole."

We can imagine how quickly William obeyed, and with strained anxiety, the mother and the rest of the children gazed at the father and the hole. Every one was so full of expectation, that there was scarcely an exclamation of astonishment heard, as the father brought out, one by one, fifteen leather purses, all new and equal in size and shape to the first.

"That's the last," he said, as he handed the fifteenth to William, and then examined the inside of the hole with his hand. "But now let us see, what all this means. I hope this paper will give satisfactory information about it. This much is certain, the purses are full of money; for one can plainly hear the pieces jingle." Now come up the questions: "How much is there? How did it get in the wall, and who owns it?" "Who but us, husband, dear?" screamed Mother Miller in high glee. "We found

it! Found it in our house, and therefore, there can be no doubt as to the proper owner."

"That is still the question," said Father Miller, coming down the ladder, and walking slowly towards the window. "This scrap of paper, written by our ancestor's hand, may possibly tell us something very different, from that which we hope and wish about the money?"

"Why do you read it, then?" quickly cried Mother Miller. "Tear it to pieces, husband."

"Are you serious?" asked Father Miller, wrinkling his brow. "Are you indeed serious, mother?"

Mother Miller was eager for a minute to snatch them from their sufferings;—a minute after she saw how unjust and sinful her advice was, and her face became quite scarlet.

"Pardon me, father," she said gently. "The scrap must be read, and, if the money is not our rightful property, it

stands to reason, that we must not keep it."

"Just so, my dear wife," said Father Miller, and his brow became again serene, while he warmly pressed the mother's hand. "Honesty is best in the long run! And now, since we are honestly inclined as to the destination of the little treasure which we have discovered, let us try to decipher these faded lines. If the money properly belongs to us,—we shall thank Heaven, from our very hearts; because the discovery has been made just at the right time; if it belongs to some other owner, the disappointment will be less painful, as we are prepared for it."

Holding their breath, for so great was the anxiety of the mother and the children, they looked at the father, who raised the scrap of paper and placed himself in the best light, so that he could decipher the almost obliterated writing. To the great joy of all, the ruddy evening light was still bright enough, to permit the writing to be made out, and, with

quiet voice—only occasionally pausing when the writing was very obscure, the father read the following words:

“I commend to God’s mercy, whosoever shall first read these lines. If they fall into the hands of my son, who is now far away in the field fighting against the Turks, or into the hands of his descendants, they may rejoice in the savings of their father. Should a strange hand discover the niche, in which I deposit these lines, and should he be an upright, honest man, he will take pains to find out my proper descendants or heirs, and give them their rightful inheritance. If he will not do this, he will commit a theft, for which the Lord and his conscience will punish him.”

At this passage, the father looked with an expressive glance at the mother, who was blushing again, and then continued to read.

“I, Gotthold Ephraim Miller, Clerk to the Honourable Council of this city, deposit my savings in this niche for the fol-

lowing reasons: The enemy is only seven miles from our city, and, it is rumored, that he will march hither to-morrow for the purpose of plundering and burning, as is his wicked and sinful purpose. Therefore I will protect my hard-earned money from his wicked hands, in order that it may fall into the hands of those, to whom it belongs, according to human and divine laws. Another reason, impelling me to this plan of concealment, is, that I am an old man, and must be ready whenever the Lord may call me. In these troublous times, when the enemy threatens us, I would consign my savings to other hands; but they would be no safer there than in my own. Therefore I determine to conceal them in this safe place, so that Heaven may care, that they fall into proper hands. Thus I commit the whole to the protection of Heaven, and wish, from my whole heart, that my economy may be blessed to my dear son or his descendants. May the Lord keep you all under his gracious pro-

tection! Written September the fifteenth. Anno Domini 1648. Gotthold Ephraim Miller, City-Clerk."

"Oh father, father!" cried the mother, as she seized her husband in her arms,—"see, the good Lord still reigns. He brings to light hidden treasures, and the blessing of our ancestor is accomplished in us! What unhopèd-for, what great, surprising good fortune!"

"Yes, indeed, a great and unhopèd for good fortune," said Father Miller, with much feeling, while the children, highly delighted, hurrahed for the worthy ancestor, who had looked out so carefully and providentially for the future. "Gotthold Ephraim Miller was our ancestor, and there is no doubt but that the treasure is mine, as it rightly belongs to his only surviving descendant. How good it is, mother, that we read the paper! Now, with a good conscience and a light heart, we can rejoice over our good fortune, but if we had not acted honestly in the matter, a sting of remorse would have always

troubled our consciences. 'Honesty is the best in the long run,' that is now very plainly shown. And, children, don't forget this proverb as long as God permits you to live. Let us all thank the Lord, who, as by a miracle, has prepared such great joy for our hearts!"

"But, must we then," said Anna, after some moments of quiet composure, "leave our dear little home? Oh how lovely it would be, if we could only sit and play and chat under the elder-bushes! what pleasure!"

"Let us see, if the little treasure is sufficient to secure us its possession," said the father. "There is still light enough to count the money, and we must not delay. Open the purses, William!"

That was an order needing no repetition. The boy quickly untied the cords that fastened the purses, and poured the contents on the window sill. Father and mother counted and it was found that each purse contained exactly one hun-

dred dollars, so that the whole amount was fifteen hundred dollars.

"Now, children," said the father, highly delighted, "there are five hundred more than we require. We can have our wish to keep the dear little house, and besides accomplish another, which is particularly near your mother's heart and mine, my dear William. You guess what I mean; for the pure joy flashes in your eye."

"Yes, I do indeed guess what you mean," cried William, throwing himself on his father's breast, whilst his mother looked down on him with a loving smile, "now you will permit me to remain faithful to my books and studies."

"Yes, I mean that, and, God helping us, it shall be so," replied the father, kissing the forehead of his son glowing with delight.

"But have you time yet, husband, dear, to take up the bond," asked the mother somewhat concerned, as it occurred to her that the treasure might

have indeed been discovered too late? "Cannot the Privy-Counsellor compel you to give up the house?"

"No, mother, he cannot," replied the father. "There is fortunately both law and justice in this country, and if I go to our persecutor and enemy to-morrow morning and pay him the thousand dollars due, all his efforts will be in vain. He must hand me the bond, whether he likes it or dislikes it. To-morrow noon it would be too late; for by ten o'clock our little house would be adjudged his property by law."

"Then God be thanked, that He has brought the wicked designs of the bad man to shame in good time," said the mother, with full heart; and the father with the children heartily united in the pious exclamation. It was now resolved, that they would spend the coming night in the rented house, because the bedding and all the household furniture had been carried there. The next day they would move back again to the dear, old, fami-

liar house, and the great-grandfather's picture should be again walled into its niche in lasting memory of the same. The money was placed in the purses; and, laden with this treasure, the happy family at length left the house, but with very different feelings from those, which had filled them with dread on the morning of the same day. All went to bed light of heart, and, with grateful spirits, returned thanks to God before sleeping. Their slumbers were sweet, and pleasant dreams delighted them.

But fresh, heavy, lowering storms again arose above the horizon of their happiness, of which no one had the slightest anticipation; a still severer and harder blow was to fall upon the happy ones, to bear which would make all their faith in the justice and mercy of God necessary. We shall see how Father Miller and his family stood this test, and whether they preserved their faith when fresh sufferings happened to them, remaining mindful of the saying, which

the mother was accustomed to quote so cheerily : "The good Lord still reigns," in which there was expressed so much unshaken trust in the grace and parental love of the Everlasting Father.





CHAPTER VII.

THE ROBBERY.

THE first rays of the morning's sun had scarcely reached the little windows of the house, under whose roof Father Miller and his family had rested during the previous night, when everything was in motion within its narrow limits. The longing to return to the old familiar walls was so strong in the breasts of all, that they left their beds very early in the morning, and made preparations to repeat without delay their scarcely finished moving. Father, mother and children, lent a busy hand and a glad heart to the work; the laboring man, who had assisted the previous day, was again called upon to help; and when Father Miller seized his hat and cane,

about nine o'clock, to take the thousand dollars to the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos, the transfer of the furniture to the old house had been really half completed.

"Now, children," said the father, as he was leaving, "only work very diligently until I return. I will not remain long away, and if I get back, as I hope, in good time, we may perhaps eat our dinner in the old house."

All promised not to be idle; and, with light heart but heavy pocket, Father Miller set out on his road to the Privy-Counsellor's. His name was sent in, and being admitted, he found himself in a few seconds opposite his enemy and persecutor.

"If you think," began the Privy-Counsellor, with harsh voice and lowering brow, "if you think to succeed, by begging and whining, in preventing me from sending you out of your house, then you are mistaken. You can spare yourself any talking—you will be obliged to talk in a quarter of an hour before the Court,

and you will hear there that you must move to-day."

"That might be the case, Herr Privy-Counsellor, if something had not taken place, which has made removal unnecessary," quietly replied Father Miller. "I have not come to implore your mercy; for I very well know, that would be useless—no, I come to demand my bond—in exchange for a thousand dollars cash, which I herewith hand you in full payment of my debt."

With these words Father Miller drew the heavy purses of money from his pocket, and laid them, one after the other, on the table before the eyes of the Privy-Counsellor. Then he opened them, took out the solid dollars, arranged them in proper order, and said, looking with a glad heart and bright eyes at the treasure: "Here, Herr Privy-Counsellor, is the money, and now I respectfully demand the bond."

What thoughts passed through the mind of the Privy-Counsellor during the

counting of the money, no one can say; for he never communicated them to any one. Had a person closely observed him at this time, he might have conjectured many things from the changing play of his features. At first, he seemed to experience the greatest rage, that the object of his hatred should have escaped his thirst for revenge and its consequences. His face by turns became yellow, brown and green with vexation. His eyes flashed so fiercely and cast such piercing glances at Father Miller, who suspected nothing, as though he wished to pierce him through. But suddenly the expression of rage disappeared from his countenance, making way for an expression of malicious wicked joy. The wry mouth softened to a hypocritical smile, and the wrinkles on his forehead became smooth. He gazed maliciously at the honest copyist, and said, clapping him with hypocritical friendliness on the shoulders:

“Ah ha! I see you must be a right

honest fellow, since you have found some one, who has loaned you the money. Who is it that has dared to trust so large a sum of money to one in your condition?"

"No one has loaned it to me," dryly answered Father Miller. "My blessed great-grandfather gave it to me."

"But tell me, how did that happen?" asked the Privy-Counsellor, quite dumb-founded, and with a stupid, confused laugh.

Father Miller, having no reason to conceal the history, faithfully narrated the fortunate occurrence, that so unexpectedly and happily assisted him in his need, and the Privy-Counsellor listened to him with a peculiar smile.

"And do you think, that I am so stupid as to believe all this?" he at length asked, and his gray eyes flashed hatred. "Go away! A good friend somewhere has helped you in your need; he does not wish to be named; and now you manufacture a story for the people,

which sounds altogether too wonderful to secure credence anywhere."

"Herr Privy-Counsellor," said Father Miller earnestly, looking the malicious man so directly and firmly in the eyes that he was obliged to close them for shame. "I thought you knew better, whether I was an honest man or not. You have found out already, that old Miller will have nothing to do with lies or rascally tricks. Moreover, you can believe just as much as you please, only hand me over the bond. Our business is done; and, for the future, I wish to have nothing to do with you."

The Privy-Counsellor swallowed the bitter pill, that Father Miller gave him to taste in silence, and only a very acute observer could have detected how angry he was. He took the bond out of his pocket-book, handed it to Father Miller, and hypocritically wished him happiness with his opportunely-discovered treasure. Father Miller wished to get away as rapidly as possible; but the Privy-Counsel-

lor still held him back and asked him, apparently in a spirit of sympathy, a host of questions, which he could not help answering without being discourteous. Still he was right glad, when this wonderful examination at length ceased, and then, having placed the bond carefully in his pocket, and made a slight bow to the Privy-Counsellor, commending himself to his favorable recollection, he hurried quickly off, as he had promised, to help his family in their removal from the new, to the dear old house.

“Yes, indeed I shall recollect you!” muttered the Privy-Counsellor with scornful laugh and eyes flashing with malice, as the door into the court closed behind the old copyist. “You will be satisfied soon, that I do not forget you, and you will feel my hand on your head sooner than you think. Only have patience, you worm, who dares to turn your sting against me? I cannot eject you from the house, but I can show you another house, which will be worse for you than if you

slept under the open sky with nothing under you but the cold ground, nothing over you but the fleeting clouds."

The Privy-Counsellor walked a while, in deep reflection, up and down his chamber, rubbed his hands with real joy from time to time, twisted his mouth into a wicked, hypocritical smile, muttering more than once between his teeth: "That will do! that will do finely! Nothing could be more welcome to me than the treasure which the fellow has found, and about which he seemed so much rejoiced. That will divert all suspicion from me, and it shall fall upon him. I will take special care of that. Patience—only patience for a few days, and everything shall be done. I am safe, and my revenge shall be satisfied. But I shall not delay a minute in laying my plans."

He rang a bell, and a servant entered the room, to whom he gave an order. The servant hurried away, returning in a quarter of an hour with a man, whose

exterior was by no means prepossessing. His clothes showed that he must be a beggar, while the lineaments of his wan, dark countenance, his crafty look showed plainly that there beat under his ragged coat, no innocent heart.

"Daniel," said the Privy-Counsellor to him, after carefully closing the door to prevent observation from any one without, "Daniel, are you satisfied with the reward you received last night?"

The fellow grinned and nodded his head. "Eighteen hundred dollars make a pretty profit," said he. "When you have any little business on hand, you can count on Daniel."

"Well, that's right," replied the Privy-Counsellor. "I have just been thinking about something else, and have sent for you on that account. I know a little business, about which there is no risk, and if it succeeds, you can count on several hundred dollars. Would you like it?"

"Would I?" asked the man with a

wicked laugh. "Only out with it. The business will be good if it turns out that way."

The Privy-Counsellor took the fellow into the corner of the room, furthest removed from the door, and whispered a few words in his ear. The man listened patiently, nodded his head several times, and then said: "The thing is arranged. You will hear from me early in the morning, and then—?"

"You will receive two hundred dollars in cash from me."

"Just so! You are the kind of man to deal with. Little danger and big reward!—Daniel would go through fire for you, sir!"

The Privy-Counsellor answered only with a condescending smile; then handed the man a package of papers, that he had taken out of a chest fastened with six locks, and opened the door of the room. The fellow put the papers away, and, after he had been warned to be prudent and careful, went off.

“Now the sword hangs over your head,” muttered the Privy-Counsellor after the fellow; *whom* he meant, we shall presently see.

Twelve o'clock at night of the same day having arrived, by the feeble light of the moon, which only as a small crescent shone in the heavens, a man might have been seen sneaking around the house, under whose roof Father Miller and his family lay in deep and peaceful slumber. All were exhausted by the labors and exertions of the past day, and their sleep on that account was so sound, that the roaring thunder of a storm could hardly have awakened them. The man, just mentioned, tried the closed window-shutters of the house gently, and uttered a terrible curse, in a low tone of voice, when he found that none of them would yield to the pressure of his hand. He then approached the door, and tried the latch. The door was also fastened.

“It will all be of no account,” he mut-

tered between his teeth, "if it should be bolted on the inside. Let me try."

He reached into the pocket of his torn coat, and took out a bunch of picklocks, whose jingling he suppressed with some skill; and tried one after another in the key-hole. No one for a while opened the lock—but at length, after the impatient fellow had uttered some low curses, the lock creaked and the door gave way.

"Ah, now its right," said he, and took a small dark lantern from his pocket, which he lighted with a match. Then he pushed down the slide of the lantern, so that scarcely a ray of light could stream from it, took off his shoes, and left them standing outside of the door, and sneaked into the house. His step was as light as a cat's; the cracking of a grain of sand under his feet could hardly be heard.

Having reached the hall-floor, he opened the slide of the lantern a little, so that light enough might be produced to show him the door of the sitting-room. This he opened. It creaked on its hinges; but

he gave it a sudden push in order to open it wide enough so that he could slip into the room and then—he paused, bending his head forward and listening attentively. The creaking of the door might have possibly awakened one of the sleepers in the house! But no!—one, two, three minutes elapse, all is quiet, so quiet and peaceful that the ticking of the wall-clock was heard distinctly. Now he stepped over the door-sill, entered and threw the light of his lamp around. No one was in the room, and the door, leading to the chamber in which Father Miller slept, was closed.

“All right,” muttered the house-breaker, and twisted his mouth into a slight, scarcely perceptible laugh. “Now the job will soon be done.”

Without any hesitation, he pulled up the slide of his lantern, so that all the light might fall upon the different articles in the room and the whole extent of its walls. There, was the picture of the ancestor of our honest copyist again walled

in, and, with earnest gaze, the eye of the long-deceased man seemed to look down on the burglar.

“Oh you can’t do me any harm,” he whispered, and laughed again. Then, after having examined everything carefully, he said: “Well! all is well! The mortar is yet fresh and wet and the picture can be loosened on that account without much noise. The two hundred dollars are easily made.”

He placed a table against the wall, stood on it, and with the help of a chisel, took down the picture from the niche without any noise, placed a handful of papers in the hole, and then put the picture back again in front of the opening. With a practised hand he pressed the frame into the fresh mortar, so that the keenest eye could not detect, that the picture had been removed, came down from the table, placed it in its proper position, carefully collected the little pieces of mortar that had dropped on the floor, put them in his pocket, took the lantern

again into his hand, and sneaked out of the room, closing the door so carefully, that the sound of the latch could scarcely be heard. Then he left the house, closed the front door, fastened it with the same picklock that had answered for opening it, put his shoes on again, and, after carefully extinguishing the light of his lantern, went away.

“That was grandly done!” he said, and laughed aloud, when there was no further fear of discovery. “You will be satisfied with me, Herr Privy-Counsellor, and the two hundred dollars shall be mine. It is a nice business to be a rascal. If it would only turn out always like yesterday and to-day.”

He turned around the corner of the next house, made his way through a narrow, dark street, and the sound of his footsteps was lost in the distance. All was quiet in the good town. The watchmen only blew their horns and cried the hours here and there; no one had seen the bold scoundrel, who had secretly

entered Father Miller's house, and that not to steal anything, but to leave something there.

What was his object, or rather that of the Privy-Counsellor?





CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMPRISONMENT.

“**F**ATHER,” cried William, as he entered the room quite excited from school, the next day. “Only think Herr Hartmann, the Notary, was robbed last night or the night before. As he was not home yesterday, but was about on business, the burglary was not noticed until to-day. The whole city is full of it. Herr Hartmann, the people say, was beside himself, not so much on account of the money stolen, although the amount was more than a thousand dollars, but more on account of the abstraction of some very important papers, whose loss cannot be repaired, or compensated for in money.”

“What are you saying?” cried Father

Miller, quite shocked. "Papers have been stolen! that is not possible. What would sharpers and rascals do with them? Have you heard this correctly, William?"

"Yes, yes! perfectly correctly, father! The people indeed spoke of a certain document, which did not belong to Herr Hartmann, but to a young Countess, whose name I have forgotten. The poor Countess was quite beside herself with fright and distress; for the people say, if she does not recover the document, she will lose a law-suit, and that the loss of her whole fortune hangs on its unfavorable termination. Yes, father, that is exactly as I heard it."

"The document," muttered the father, and a horrible suspicion arose, "the document, is it the Countess Kronberg's?"

"Yes, yes; Kronberg, father," cried William. "Kronberg, that's the name the people said! Exactly."

"Indeed! Can it be, that the Privy-Counsellor would carry his baseness so

far as to turn burglar and thief? No, that cannot be possible."

"Broken into and stolen,—that is perfectly certain," repeated William. "And the talk was about the Countess Kronberg's document, that's also certain. But no one knows who did it, and suspicion rests on no one."

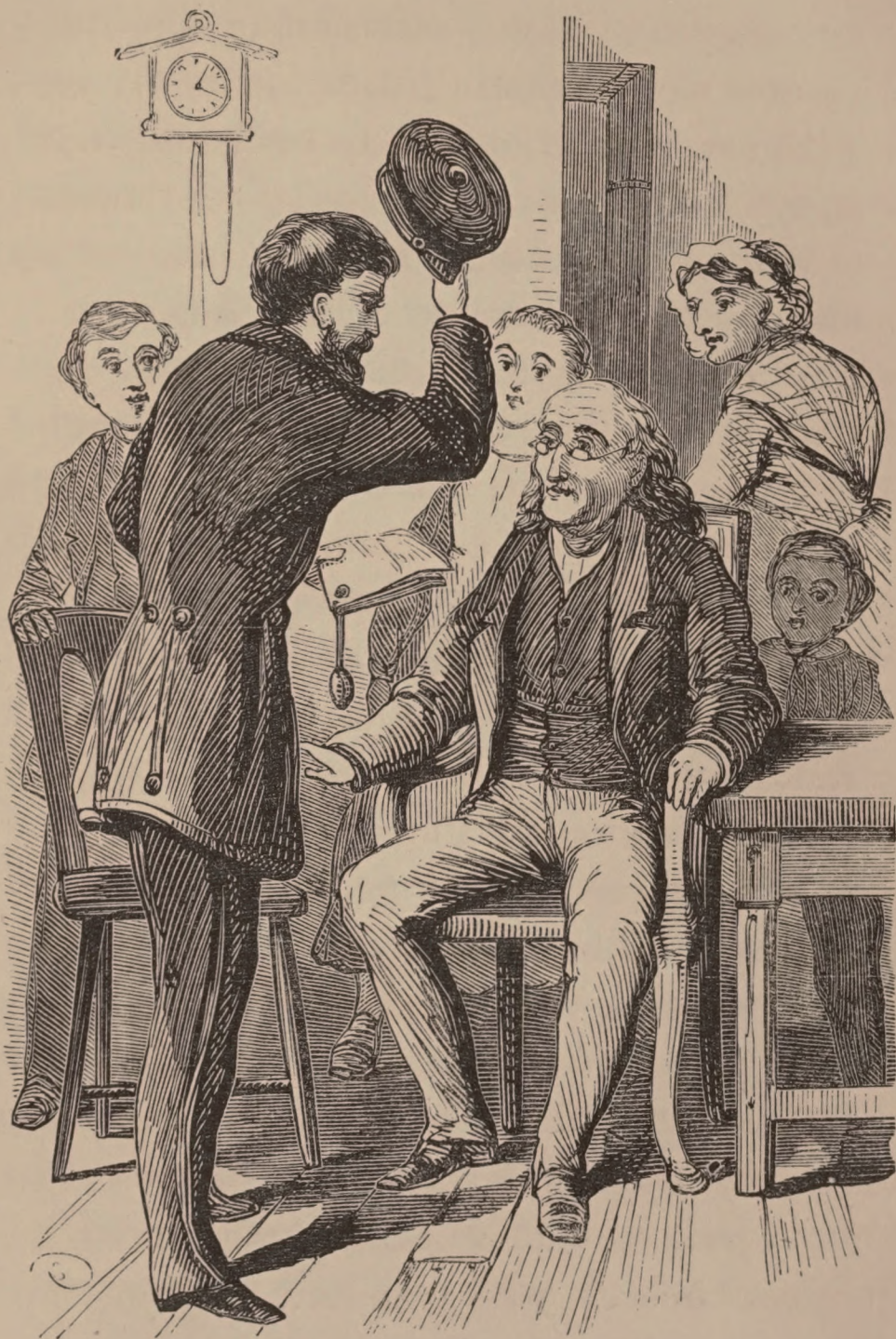
"I must go, see and ascertain for myself," said Father Miller resolutely, and seized his hat and stick. "If mother returns, William, and it won't be long, because she has only gone to market, tell her what you have heard, and ask her to think over it, because I must speak to her about it. Don't forget, my boy, do you hear?"

William promised, and Father Miller betook himself with quick steps to Herr Hartmann's office. Herr Hartmann was not in; he had gone to the Police office, said one of the clerks. But this clerk fully confirmed the report which William had brought home, and he showed Father Miller the very window through which

the thieves had entered after breaking it ; also the iron chest that had been broken open, and the cupboard from which the important papers had been taken. Almost all the papers in the cupboard had disappeared, and only a lot of old books, which lay on the lower shelves, had been left untouched. Father Miller shook his head in silence. Whoever had done the deed must have been perfectly acquainted with the arrangements of Herr Hartmann's office—that was certain. Except the cupboard in question, in which Herr Hartmann was accustomed to keep his most important papers, and the money-chest, no injury had been done to any other piece of furniture, to no other desk or cupboard. This circumstance shook his suspicion about the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos not a little. For how could he have acquired such exact knowledge of the office-arrangements ? Besides, how explain the common theft of money ? Father Miller knew very well, that the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos had large pos-

sessions, and if he attributed to him the baseness of abstracting the document on which so much depended, he could not suspect that he would have broken open the strong iron chest for the sake of a small sum of money. The document alone could have had attractions for him. If he had succeeded in securing this, the object would be attained that might induce him to commit the burglary. Once having it in his possession, it would have been a piece of foolhardiness to risk detection by delaying with the chest, to open which required more strength and longer time than the opening and robbing of the cupboard.

Father Miller hesitated, doubted and was, therefore, undecided what he should do in these circumstances. On the one hand, it seemed to be his duty at least to mention to Herr Hartmann the ground of suspicion, which he thought existed against the Privy-Counsellor; and on the other hand, it seemed perilous and imprudent to suspect a man, who held a high



State-office and who could not possibly undertake a pitiful robbery of money. He determined at last to consult over the matter with his wise and prudent wife, and accordingly betook himself home.

In a few words he had laid the state of affairs before the mother, who had returned in the meantime from market, and had asked her: What was to be done?

The mother rested her head upon her hands, and sat for a long while in earnest, silent reflection.

"Listen, husband, dear," she said at last, "suppose the Privy-Counsellor had broken open the chest *for the purpose* of perhaps bringing suspicion on a common sharper or rascal? If you consider him once capable of a dishonest act, let it be understood, that he would perpetrate it with all possible forethought!"

"Indeed, dear wife, I believe that you have struck the nail just on the head," said Father Miller quickly. "Now see, I could have hardly believed, that you

would have pointed me out the right way so clearly. If I cannot follow it and declare the Privy-Counsellor is the thief; still my suspicion in its full force points towards him, and if I must tell the truth, I can say—I *believe* that the Privy-Counsellor is the thief. It was of great importance to him to possess the document in question, as you saw from my correspondence with him, and his promises and bribes. He, who is capable of tempting an honest man by such baits, from the straight forward way, is also capable of doing still worse. But with all this, what's to be done?"

"Well, husband, dear, that is also plain," replied the mother. "Herr Hartmann must be informed of your suspicions, and then it must be left to him, what steps he will take against the suspected thief. That is, in my opinion, your proper duty."

"But will they not believe, that I do this only through hatred of the Privy-Counsellor?" asked Father Miller.

“Probably yes, probably no,” replied the mother. “At any rate, a conscience void of offence is of more importance than the people’s opinion, and I think, if you can answer for your actions before the good Lord, you can also do it before men.”

“Well said,” cried Father Miller firmly. “*Fiat justitia et pereat mundus*, said the Latins, which means, in our words, justice must have its course even if the world should perish. If my suspicion is unfounded, may God forgive me; but I shall not reproach myself, if I follow the voice of my conscience and tell Herr Hartmann all I know and suspect.”

The hour of twelve having arrived, they seated themselves at the table; but Father Miller scarcely allowed himself time to eat his potato-soup, before he was on his way to Herr Hartmann, whom he hoped to find at home about this time. He was admitted, and, although Herr Hartmann received him very coolly and with repulsive contemptuousness, he com-

municated what seemed to him the truth according to his view of the subject. The notary listened quietly to his statement without interrupting him. When Father Miller had at length finished, he hoped to hear at least an expression of thanks from the man, who had deprived him of his support through wholly false suspicion. But Herr Hartmann seemed to harbor very different feelings from those of thankfulness in his heart. He looked with a penetrating glance at his former copyist, and coldly said: "It is a bold thing for you to suspect a gentleman, who enjoys universal respect. However, we will see. I promise you at least, that you shall receive information from me as soon as I get more light on the subject!"

Father Miller, who meant nothing but that which was honorable, felt himself deeply hurt by this harsh and repulsive conduct of his former employer. Without saying another word, he grasped his hat and came away. He had scarcely left the room, when a side door opened,

and the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos entered Herr Hartmann's room.

"Did you hear him?" asked Herr Hartmann.

"Every word!" was the answer given with a hypocritical smile.

"Well, then, you know that my opinion is fully made up about the rascal," said the Notary. "His wicked conscience has driven him here with the view of clearing himself from guilt. I no longer doubt, that he committed the burglary. The thousand dollars that he paid you yesterday, his perfect knowledge of the office, the cupboard not broken open but its lock picked,—everything so plainly speaks against him, that one need not doubt nor even hesitate. He stole the money to save himself from beggary, and he took the papers in order to have revenge for his dismissal from service. The whole is as clear as sunlight."

"Clear as sunlight!" added the Privy-Counsellor. "His letter to me, offering to deliver a document which does not ex-

ist, or is a counterfeit, clearly shows that the fellow is a scamp."

"There you are mistaken, Herr Privy-Counsellor," rejoined the Notary. "The document does exist, is genuine, and will be found again."

"We shall see, we shall see!" said the Privy-Counsellor, while a malicious grin distended his lips. "What are you going to do with Miller, the old sinner?"

"That I must consider. I would like to spare him on account of his past diligent and strictly honest service; still I must take steps at least to recover the document."

"Just so," said the Privy-Counsellor; "to spare such sharpers and rascals would be a sin against God and the world."

After this conversation both left the room, and the Privy-Counsellor took his departure in an unusually good humor. When in the street he rubbed his hands together, laughed to himself and muttered sundry unintelligible words, so that the

people who met him stopped and looked after him in perfect amazement.

On the evening of the same day, that Father Miller had been so much hurt at the unkind and repulsive reception given him by his former employer, he sat quite contented and happy amid his family; for after he had communicated the extent of his mortification to his excellent wife, the last traces of its effects had disappeared from his breast. He knew that he had only done his duty. What troubled him so much had been the thanklessness he had received as a reward. His reward, however, properly consisted in a pure, unspotted conscience, and hence, without any bitter reflections, he gave himself up to the comforting conversation of his family.

During this conversation, it might have been about ten o'clock at night, their pleasure was suddenly brought to an end. There was a knock at the front door, and a loud voice in the street demanded that it should be immediately opened.

“That is certainly a late and noisy visitor,” said Father Miller. “Go out, William, and open the door.”

William laid down the brush that he had been diligently using, all the evening, and, in three leaps was at the front door, which he opened without delay. Immediately four or five soldiers of police fully-armed entered, hurried quickly by William into the room, two of them stationing themselves at the door, letting their arms come to an order with a crash on the floor, while the others with an officer hurried to Father Miller.

“What does this mean?” said the latter, less frightened than astonished, while the mother and the children sat around with pale faces. “How comes it, sir, that you break into this house and disturb the peace of a quiet family?”

“*That* you will soon find out!” replied the officer of the Police harshly. “You are my prisoner, and must not move. The house is surrounded by my men, and

any attempt at escape will be in vain, and will only increase your punishment."

"But, of what am I accused?" asked Father Miller, while the children wept bitterly and the mother trembling embraced her husband. "What have I done? Who dares accuse me of crime?"

"Peace," commanded the officer. "It will soon appear, whether you are as innocent as you seem." And turning to his men he said. "Search the house thoroughly! Let no corner escape examination."

While all awaited in fearful anxiety the issue of this singular occurrence, the soldiers obeyed the order of the officer, and could be heard going through every part of the house. In a quarter of an hour they returned with the report, that they had discovered nothing suspicious.

"Well then," said the officer, "it only remains to search this room. Will you tell me voluntarily," said he to Father Miller, "where you have concealed your

plunder, or shall I examine everything before your eyes?"

"Plunder? Conceal? What do you mean by these words?" asked Father Miller in a rage. "Do you look upon me—Miller, the old copyist—as a thief and a rascal? Mother, quick give him the keys to all the cupboards and drawers! Let the gentlemen do as they like; for in fact, as appearances show, might here goes before right. I have already undergone sorrow that was partly a most perfect satisfaction. Fear not, dear wife. We are innocent, and punishment will fall upon him, who has calumniated us and brought us under suspicion. Peace, wife, peace. There is no reason here for shedding tears."

"Yes, indeed, you are right," answered the wife, drying her eyes.

With pale but peaceful countenance she handed the keys to the officer, who immediately opened all the chests and cases of the drawers and examined their contents. Of course, he found nothing

suspicious, and his manner became somewhat more polite than it had been.

“The examination furnished nothing,” he said. “Still it gives me pain that I must arrest you and take you to prison. My orders are very definite. Follow us then without resistance, so that we need not be compelled to employ force. Forward march, but halt! What’s this? A picture fastened in the wall—the mortar yet fresh—this may be the place of concealment, and we be yet deceived.”

“Convince yourself of the groundlessness of your suspicion,” said Father Miller, proud in the consciousness of his innocence.

The officer looked sharply at him, seemed to hesitate, but ordered his men to take the picture down. In a moment it was done, and a general shriek proceeded from the whole party, when the soldier of police took out of the niche a package of the miscellaneous papers sought for, and handed them to his commanding officer. The latter looked rap-

idly over them, and then cast a look of contempt at Father Miller.

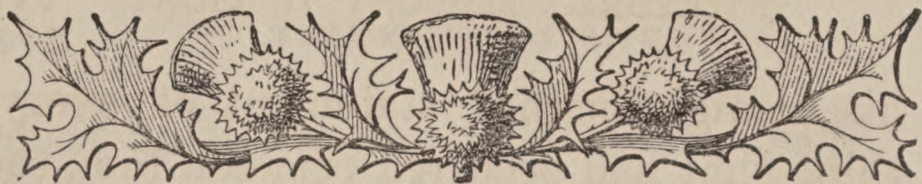
“Concealment will help you no longer,” said he sternly; “the burglar is discovered. Bind him; all indulgence is at an end.”

“Great Heavens! how did the papers get there?” shrieked Mother Miller, pale and horror-stricken.

“Besides the wicked men, who have done the deed, God alone knows,” replied Father Miller, with an expression of agony, although he had not lost his self-control. “Be quiet, mother! Be quiet, dear children!” he continued, turning to his family. “The good Lord still reigns! He knows that I am innocent! He will find a way to show my innocence to the world! Be comforted! With peaceful conscience I now go to prison; with a joyous heart I shall leave it again. Do not weep, but compose yourselves. Submit to that which is inevitable, and do not forget your mother’s comforting proverb: “The good Lord still reigns.”

Weeping, sobbing and wringing their hands, the mother and children crowded around the father, who, with pale but peaceful countenance, gave them his blessing, and embraced and kissed them for the last time. Then he voluntarily allowed himself to be bound by the officers of the Law, and followed them with a firm step to prison, only casting back on his family a last look of heartfelt love. The mother and children would have followed him, but the officer sternly forbade them, and they were obliged to return with heavy hearts. No sleep visited their eyelids that night; the only support they could lean upon was the God of heaven; the only consolation, the only comfort they could find lay in reliance on Him, from whose hands, love and affection stream down upon the children of men.

“The good Lord still reigns!” whispered the mother, and with folded hands the children repeated: “The good Lord still reigns—He will be our Father!”



CHAPTER IX.

THE LORD WILL BRING WICKEDNESS TO LIGHT.

FOURTEEN days had elapsed, and Father Miller still pined in prison; still no hope was found, that his innocence would be made manifest. The plan for his destruction had been so artfully laid, that any rescue was hardly possible. Everything was against him! the papers found concealed in the niche behind the picture, which Herr Hartmann had recognized as being a portion of those stolen from him; the thousand dollars to whose receipt the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos testified; the letter, written by Father Miller to the latter with the view of testing the Privy-Counsellor's honesty. Of what avail were all protestations of his innocence; of what avail

his straightforward statement of everything that had occurred between him, the Privy-Counsellor and Herr Hartmann. The Judge as well as all the citizens of the place were convinced of Father Miller's guilt, and everybody considered him a bold scoundrel, who only sought, by consistent lying, to cover up his own misdeeds with obscurity.

No pen can describe, no words can express what Mother Miller and the children suffered in the meantime. It was a miracle, that they were not laid out on beds of sickness from their mental sufferings. They found comfort and assistance nowhere. All their former friends and acquaintances treated them with repelling, deeply-marked contempt, so that without their firm reliance on God, they would have been the most unhappy beings on earth.

One day they learned accidentally, that on the coming morning, judgment would be pronounced against the poor innocent prisoner. It was expected, that

the punishment would consist in confinement in chains for many years in the House of Correction. This terrible news came like a stroke of thunder, to the family, shattering and destroying everything. The mother wrung her hands and wept bitterly; Anna and the little Albert wept and cried for mercy, and William, the poor wan boy, felt his heart almost broken at the terrible news.

“Oh, my God!” he muttered, with prayerful voice, raising his closed eyes heavenwards, “hast Thou then wholly deserted us?”

The mother hearing these words wept still more bitterly. Now, when misfortune, anguish and misery seemed unavoidable,—now her heretofore stout heart quailed, and she dare no longer say aloud—“Be of good cheer, children, the good Lord still reigns.” But she thought it still, she thought it with her weak hope. “If He will, He can bring us help, even when human eye can nowhere see a star of hope. But will He, then, the great almighty God?”

This doubt, and surely the merciful Father in heaven pardoned it in her poor, trembling spirit, plunged the mother into fresh grief, and so heart-breaking was this outburst of her sorrows that William, who knew of no counsel, of no assistance, hastened away to obtain, if possible, fresh composure and some steadiness of spirit, out in the open country. With downcast eyes and bowed head, cap pressed down over his wan, distressed countenance, he hurried through the streets to the nearest woods, where he wandered about for hours in the wilderness. Twilight came on, the sun sank with golden hues behind the mountains, but he noticed it not in the bitterness of his anguish. When night set in he first observed, that the darkness was so great in the woods, that he could not see five steps ahead, and then, recovering from his abstraction, he recollected his mother, who was doubtless extremely anxious at his protracted absence. Seeking the way to the city, he

could find no paths, nor could he tell by the stars which direction to take, because the sky after sunset had been covered with heavy clouds. While standing helpless, he heard distant thunder and the sharp flash of lightning broke through the darkness for a minute. Soon it began to rain ; the large drops splashed and clattered among the leaves and in a few minutes wet William to the skin.

The boy cared nothing for that ; the heavier the storm became, the more welcome it was to him, inasmuch as the sulphur-yellow lightning at least furnished sufficient light so that he could find the right road. Finding the points of the compass from the moss on the trunks of the trees, he hastened obliquely across the woods in the direction the city lay. Soon he found a beaten path, followed it, and after half an hour's walk, saw a light glimmering in the distance. He then redoubled his speed. The storm at the same time broke out so fearfully, that he was glad when he reached the small

house, through whose windows the glimmer of light had been seen ; recognizing it by a flash of lightning as a beer-house, which stood alone in the woods, about a quarter of an hour's walk from the city. "You will stay here until the heaviest shower is over," he said to himself, and entered the drinking-room, where he quietly squatted behind the stove. No one had noticed his entrance ; for the two guests who occupied the room alone, were engaged in a loud and angry discussion. William paid no attention to their words at first ; but suddenly he started,—his father's name was mentioned.

"You may say what you will, Heinz," said one of the men sitting at the table to his companion, "but Miller, the old copyist, is innocent. I ought to know. Then you hold your tongue !"

"But still, he is the rascal, Daniel," replied the other. "The gentleman at the green law-table ought to know better than such a ragamuffin as you."

The first man gave a rough answer; the second became angry, and soon, in addition to being drunk with the wine they had been drinking, they quarreled in so rough a style, that William would have certainly left his hiding-place, if a deep, lively interest in the innocence of his father had not detained him.

"You stupid ass!" shrieked Daniel at last, when the quarrel had almost come to blows, "so that you can see that I know more of the affair than all the wise gentlemen around the green table, I will tell you the whole story. But first swear, that you will not betray me. However, I am already sure of you; if you expose me, you know I will not spare you, and you would have to snarl in the dog-hole along with me. Now see here, this is the way the thing was managed."

With breathless attention, William listened to the tale of the sharper. He was hardly able to refrain from crying aloud with astonishment and delight. Daniel

said, that the Privy-Counsellor Werthlos had bribed him to break into the office of Hartmann, the Notary, in order to secure a certain document for him.

“There’s a cunning fellow,” said he. “He promised me that I should have all the money that we found, while he would be satisfied with the papers, which could be of no use to me. And if the thing was found out, or we should be caught in the act, he would help me out of it. But I can depend on myself, if he won’t stand by me, because he was just as much in it as I was. The window was broken open, the chest emptied, and the papers taken out of the cupboard. My picklocks, which never failed, helped me grandly. The Privy-Counsellor took what he wanted and gave me the money for my share. But now listen, what a cunning fox the Privy-Counsellor is. In order that he and I should not be suspected, he gave me some of the papers, so that I should break into the house of old Miller, the copyist, and place them behind the pic-

ture, where the old man had found fifteen hundred dollars a short time before. This whole business was a trifling matter for me, but it brought me some two hundred dollars, which the Privy-Counsellor counted down to the cent. Now, see here, you ass, you blockhead, that's the true story! and, if I wanted, I could cook a pretty kettle of fish for the Privy-Counsellor. But I will take care of myself. I have him fast; it will be hard work for him to get loose. He will have to pay many a hard dollar, before he has shaken me off."

What was further said William did not hear. With a heart throbbing with joy, he crept unnoticed out of the room and plunged in the rain, the night and the storm. The stormy weather no longer troubled him. He laughed, wept, shouted and cried out in the woods a hundred times, in the exuberance of his joy, his thankfulness; "The good Lord still reigns! He will bring wickedness

to light! Oh God! how Thou hast blessed me, father, mother, all of us!"

He continued crying, shouting and thanking God in his heart even to the gate of the city. Here he considered what he should do. He felt impelled to hurry to his mother to tell her the joyful news, but he dare not spare the time. He must first take steps, that the rascal, whose declaration would establish his father's innocence clearly, should be arrested. "No," he said to himself, "first to the Director of Police and then to her." Like an arrow he flew through the streets to the house of the powerful official in question. On his knees he begged the servant to show him to his master, and the servant who knew the boy well and was himself a good man, could not resist the request. He took him to the Director, and when the latter asked him, in astonishment, what the late call meant, William with quick words related the confession of the rascal.

"Two Lieutenants of Police and twen-

ty men! At once! Forward!" commanded the Director and then, turning to William, who, being thoroughly unnerved by the result, was weeping, "Calm yourself, calm yourself, my child," said the kind gentleman. "You have acted cautiously and bravely, and I doubt no longer in the least of your father's innocence. Go home, tell your mother, what you have heard and seen; tell her also that I—the Director of Police—will take care that justice is done her husband. Go, my dear boy, and may Heaven protect you!"

William thanked the kind-hearted gentleman with an overflowing soul, for his goodness and his quick active sympathy, and then hastened home. At the Police-Director's door, he met the commanding officers with their men, all fully armed; and William saluted this time with a joyous face, the very men who, some weeks before, had thrust his father into prison. Then he ran quick as lightning through the streets; for his heart, over-

flowing with love and joy, seemed to lend him wings. Overheated, breathless, but with radiant eyes, he burst into the room, and threw himself into the arms of his mother, who gently reproved him for his long absence. But he cried; "Mother, don't scold me; for the good Lord Himself has guided my steps; Rejoice, mother, and you also, Anna and Albert—*the good Lord still reigns*. Our father is innocent, and God has brought his innocence to light!"

And while all stood around him in raptures, he narrated what had occurred to him; and the mother and children thought they heard the voice of an angel announcing such glad tidings to them. Their indescribable happiness brought tears to their eyes. The mother fell upon her knees, and with shining eyes looking upwards to Heaven, folded her hands together, her heart exulting and rejoicing as she prayed: "O Lord, our God, thou art a great and jealous God! Thou bringest the wickedness to light, which has

been done in secret, and savest the innocent from destruction; Lord God, our Father, Thee we laud and praise, with heart and mouth and hands!"

And the children prayed with her, and then fell into her arms, and there was no bounds to their joy that evening. The happiness which they felt in the depths of their hearts and souls was beyond description.





CHAPTER X.

THE SECRETARY OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

WILLIAM'S account bore the stamp of truth so clearly, and the probability that the Privy Counsellor Werthlos had a hand in the business on account of the document in question, was so strong with the Director of Police, that, without any delay, he determined on a course of procedure, which would necessarily lead to the fullest explanation of the whole affair. He sent one detachment of his soldiers to the solitary Beer-house in the woods, with orders to surround the house and seize both of the villains, who, it was likely, were still sitting there. He enjoined prompt and efficient execution of his order, and hurried the command on a forced march, through

the night and the rain, to the place which had been exactly described. The other Officer received an order to seize, with all possible quietness, the Privy Counsellor Werthlos and to take possession of his papers. Both orders were executed in the most precise manner, and early the next morning the rumor of the discovery of the real burglar ran through the whole city like a train of gunpowder. At ten o'clock William was called to the trial. He made his appearance in haste, and greeted his father with joy, who stood before the judge, pale and sad, but still with great self-possession.

"Be of good cheer, father, the good Lord still reigns!" whispered William in the worthy man's ear, while his eyes flashed with delight.

After a few minutes' delay, the other prisoners were brought into the Court-room, and Father Miller's eyes were widely dilated, when he saw the Privy-Counsellor opposite him. The trial began—the Privy-Counsellor could deny

nothing — Daniel, his accomplice, acknowledged the whole crime, and, in addition to this evidence, the papers seized at his house, contained not only the document that had been abstracted, but many others, that could not have been obtained honorably by the distinguished gentleman. Father Miller, of course, was at once released, and his dismissal was accompanied by a concise refutation of the charges against him. Trembling with joy he hurried, along with William, to his wife and children, and the meeting after so long and painful a separation was truly affecting.

“Yes, the good Lord still reigns!” said Father Miller, when the first enrapturing paroxysm of joy was over, and the whole family was sitting around the table. “This belief, mother, was my consolation in suffering; it held me up in all my sorrow,—and although I had fear, yet I did not despair. The great Lord God was with me, and the consciousness of my innocence supported my strength. Let

us be thankful unto the Lord, my children, for now I hope with confidence, that all anguish, all misery and all sadness are over, and no man hereafter will cast a doubt on the honor of old Miller."

As regards the latter statement, Father Miller was right; but the story is not yet ended. If he had tasted the bitter things of the trial, he was now to enjoy the sweets of the same.

A crowd of old friends, none of whom had suffered themselves indeed to be seen during his troubles, called already at noon and expressed their sympathy, to Father Miller and family, in loving words. Towards four o'clock there was a knock at the door, and there entered—to the great surprise and astonishment of the whole family—Herr Hartmann.

"Father Miller," he said, and approached with a slightly confused countenance, "can you forgive me? I have been a great sinner towards you, and you were right in speaking, as you did, to me at our separation, 'that my penitence

and request for pardon would compensate you for the bitter hours which my blind prejudice occasioned you.' Father Miller, here I stand, a penitent and humbled man; here I stand and extend my hand to you, asking forgiveness. Forgive me, I was cunningly deceived and—."

"Not another word, Herr Hartmann, not another word!" said Father Miller, interrupting the remarks of his former employer and shaking the hand warmly that had been extended him. "I forgive you every wrong you have ever done me; for I well know that you inflicted the blow on your old Miller, with a reluctant heart. But listen now to me and believe what I tell you about the history of those letters. You see—"

"I know it already, I know it all, gallant, brave, honest man," said Herr Hartmann interrupting him. "I have looked over the papers of the worthless calumniator, have found your last letter to him, and that not only establishes your innocence, but also your inflexible integrity.

On that account I have come here to tell it to you, and to beg forgiveness of you, even on my knees if it were necessary, until I had appeased your heart justly enraged against me. I know everything, everything that was done and transacted between you. Can you now forgive the penitent sinner?"

With tearful eyes Herr Hartmann gazed upon Father Miller, from whose eyes tears also flowed; and he threw himself into the open arms and on the throbbing heart of his brave employer, who had only been deceived by shameful lies.

"Oh God," he exclaimed, with deep feeling, "how happy Thou hast made me. Thou hast removed even this shadow that stained my honesty. Yes, indeed, mother, your trustful and encouraging proverb has been very clearly manifested in us. In every little circumstance, I see clearly the hand of God and, with thankful heart, I look up to Him and cry with joy: 'The good Lord still reigns. He is with us when all others forsake us.' Herr Hart-

mann, you cannot think how your communication has rejoiced me. Had my last letter to the Privy Counsellor not been found, a suspicion would still have rested upon me. But now all is well; for every one must know that old Miller, the copyist, never knowingly or voluntarily deviated from the path of honesty."

"No one would have suspected it," said Herr Hartmann, pressing the copyist's hands, "if you had not been so imprudent, my dear friend, as seemingly to consent to the temptations of the Privy-Counsellor."

"Yes, I did commit a fault indeed," said Father Miller. "A man should avoid even the appearance of evil, and I had forgotten that. Now I have suffered for it, as was right, and I do not think that a like error will be committed."

Many things were said about the wonderful connection between all portions of the eventful history, and Herr Hartmann finally made a proposition that Father Miller should return to his service at increased

salary. Father Miller, as was natural, was pleased with the idea, and the mother seemed quite happy also. Here indeed was already a sweet fruit of her bitter sufferings, that she could, with a larger income, spare many a little sum for her son William.

“And the Countess Kronberg’s document,” asked Father Miller, as Herr Hartmann was about leaving.

“Was happily found, dear Miller,” replied the Notary. “It is already in your old desk, which stands in its old place, waiting its former master. Don’t leave the place long empty, Father Miller. Notwithstanding I was so strongly convinced of your guilt—still I always felt the want of you.”

Father Miller was heartily delighted at this expression from his employer, and he promised him to be at his post very early in the morning as usual. Then Herr Hartmann left, and the happy family were beginning to chat about the visit, when there was another rap at the door. Wil-

liam quickly opened it, and a beautiful young lady entered, whom the father recognized immediately as the Countess Kronberg.

“Herr Miller,” she said, in a friendly tone, “I cannot refrain from giving an expression of my hearty thanks for the honest fidelity, which you have shown in my business affairs. Another in your place would have yielded probably to the temptation that was spread so attractively before him, and I, an unprotected orphan, would have been compelled to go through life in poverty and misery.”

Father Miller evaded the thanks, which she expressed, by saying that he had done nothing more than his duty; still it did his heart good that his inflexible honesty had been acknowledged. The Countess chatted an hour with the family, and, on leaving, gave them each a present. To the mother and father a ring with a precious stone, having the inscription engraved inside ‘*with heartfelt thanks* ;’ to William a handsome gold watch; to Anna

an exquisite bracelet; and to the little Albert some elegant toys. Father Miller did not wish to receive these valuable articles, and only yielded to her wish, when she said very earnestly that it would grieve her if he did not suffer her to act in accordance with the promptings of her heart. After the Countess had promised to remain in the future the firmest friend of the family, she departed, leaving behind her in the little house hearts truly joyous and thankful.

“Now indeed,” said the father, “the good Lord recompenses us abundantly from the fullness of His mercy for the short period of suffering which He imposed on us as a trial. How can we be thankful enough to Him !”

The mother and the children, no less than Father Miller, felt what great things the Lord had done for them. But there was still another surprise in store for them.

Twilight had already set in, when richly-dressed servant, clad in the colors

of the royal house, approached the house of Father Miller and modestly inquired for the brave copyist.

“What is your wish?” said the latter, looking astonished at the visitor.

“His Majesty, our most gracious King, has commanded me to hand you this letter to-day,” replied the servant, drawing out of the breast-pocket of his livery, shining with its silver and gold, a large official letter with the seal of State, and placing it in the hands of the greatly-astonished copyist. “You will bring the answer yourself to His Majesty,” he added. “In the meanwhile I hope the letter may communicate something very agreeable to you!”

With these words the servant bowed, declined escort to the door, and left.

“Mother, bring the light quickly, I beg you!” said Father Miller, as the front door closed behind the servant. “I can assure you that I am very curious to know what His Majesty has commanded or communicated to me.”

The mother was not less curious than the father, and brought the light quickly. The children crowded around the father, who broke the royal seal and loosened the envelope of the letter. A folded sheet of paper fell out, and a delicately written scrap of paper, with the heading—"My dear Miller." When the father perceived this, he cast a hurried glance over the lines, then folded his hands, looked upwards with tearful eyes, and said, with subdued voice: "Oh great and precious Almighty Lord, Thou true Father in heaven, this is indeed too much of Thy grace and mercy. Whence have I, a poor sinner, deserved so much? children, mother, listen," turning around with overflowing delight to his family, "hear what the King has written to me, his most humble subject, with his own hand. Only listen—"

Father Miller had no need to ask them twice; for indeed all had never been so attentive and anxiously expectant in

their whole lives as in those few minutes. And the father read the following letter :

MY DEAR MILLER :

We have learned what a faithful and skillful servant you have been to your employer. It has also been told us, that our Superior Court, although indeed deceived by false appearances, has acted against you with great rigor. We wish to compensate you for this. A faithful, skillful and God-fearing workman is always welcome to us, and on this account, we herewith appoint you Secretary of our Privy-Council, with the annual salary of fifteen hundred dollars. We enclose the Patent for the same, made out by our Minister for the Interior, and remain your well-affected King,

WILLIAM.

How can I describe the exultation, the delight, the rush of joy, which now broke forth from the hearts of these highly-blessed people, in an incessant stream.

Dear reader, thou shouldest have seen this joy thyself in order to have had an idea of it. I can only tell thee this much, that, on that evening, there was scarcely a person in the world as happy as Father Miller and his family. Dost thou perhaps envy them their happiness? Cast aside all envy; for thou must thyself acknowledge that this happiness was not undeserved. But if thou wilt impress indelibly on thy heart the mother's proverb: "The good Lord still reigns," I shall have no objection, but will rather hope that it may be of advantage to thee, as it was to our friends, who found consolation and comfort, even in their bitterest anguish, in a glance at Him, whose eye ever has a fatherly watch over every one, whose heart is pure and who keeps himself undefiled by sin and wickedness, through Jesus Christ.



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